



YOU GENTRIFY
WE OCCUPY



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"House Magic: Bureau of Foreign Correspondence" is an information project about cultural and political squatting and occupation.

All zines and some project documentation online at: sites.google.com/site/housemagicbfc/

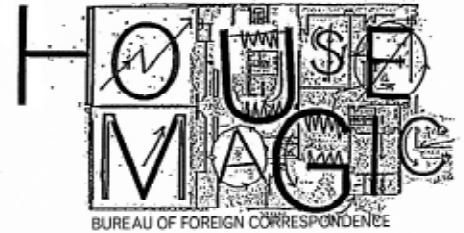
Project blog at: occuprop.blogspot.com/

logo: Suck Zoo Han

design: James Trimarco

This third issue of the "House Magic" project zine is something like a rain barrel in a hurricane – a torrent of information has so overwhelmed my capacity to contain it that what has found its way between these covers is here almost by accident. Certainly by the convenience of a certain urgency. (Apologies to Brighton and Hamburg for failing to include 'em this time – next, and soon!) Since the last issue appeared in early 2010, I have researched, talked and organized in Hamburg, Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, New York and Madrid. Primarily through the encounters organized by the SQEK group I have learned more than I could imagine about the world of squatting and social centers. At the same time, the movement of 15 May – the "Spanish revolution" – has galvanized folks, and amped up movement activities to new levels. In the spring it seemed that increasing illegalization of squatting and repression in Europe was clamping down on the movement – now, all bets are off. It's a new game – and everyone is digging in...

The contents of this issue more or less follows the editor's travels this spring, after the talk "Monster Institutions" in New York City, to the SQEK conference in Berlin, to the show of NYC "rebel culture" mounted at Rote Flora in Hamburg, to a week at La Générale en Manufacture in Paris, then a conference at Joe's



Mural at the Gängeviertel occupation in Hamburg, Germany:
"Time is not money/ Work is not life"

Garage and a talk at W139 in Amsterdam... Intermittently I have been bending an elbow at Tabacalera and Casa Blanca in Madrid. It is a partial, personal, and I hope not too boring. All along I have been blogging the "House Magic" project at occuprop.blogspot.com, and uploading essays and notes and such to sites.google.com/site/housemagicbfc.

Telegraphic thanks go to Susan Ryan (NYC), Miguel Martinez and all of SQEK, our many hosts in Berlin, especially New York Bethanien, and in Hamburg Michel Chevalier and the Rote Flora Siebdruckwerkstatt, all the genial artists at La Générale in Paris, especially Eric Lombard, and all the great contributors here. Besos, abrazos, y See you when I do.

— Alan W. Moore, [awm13579 \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:awm13579[at]gmail.com).

BULLETINS

“We Are Closed Due to Boredom” — Final entry on a blog of “People’s Art” in the Hafencity district of Hamburg:

Hamburg, 31 Dec 2008: The higher the buildings get the less sky remains visible and the room for spontaneity becomes increasingly condensed.

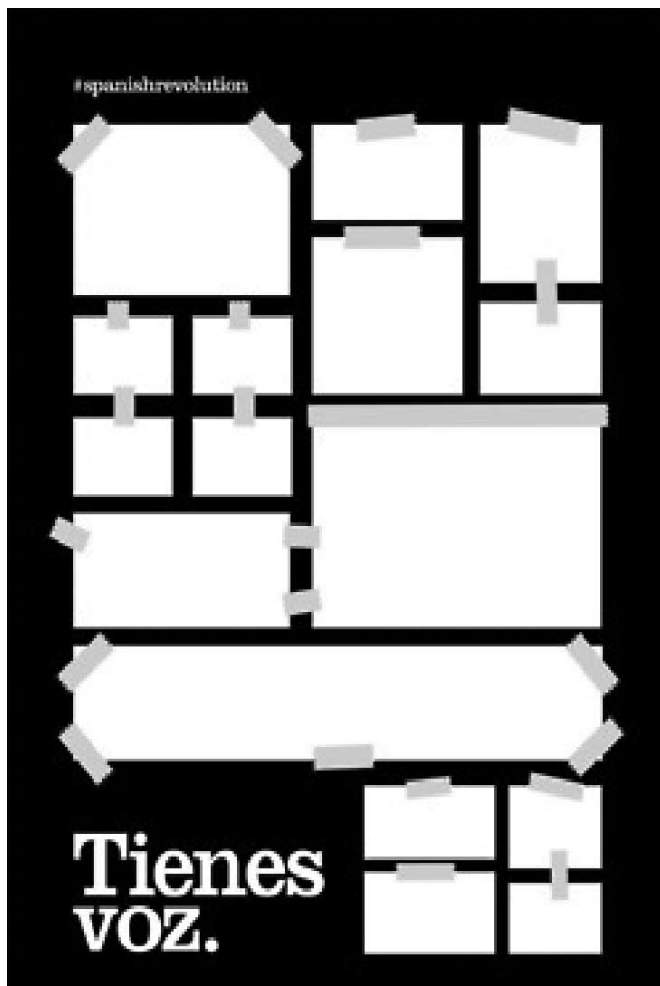
Our motivation for this website was always to support a spontaneous expression of the people as the HafenCity took shape. Unfortunately, we are disappointed by the lack of anything permitted to happen here, apart from some strictly regulated events, solely providing a decorative backdrop for investor relations activities. For this reason we will no longer update the content on this website until we notice something worth reporting.

– volkskunst-hafencity.de

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July 2010 – **Haus der künstlerischen Arbeit (HKA) declared** in empty office building, the DGB Building of a German trade union association, Schützenbahn 11, in the city of Essen.

To paraphrase their communique somewhat: They ask, why take a building when the chances of success are low? They made an application to use it, then tried to follow up, but it ended up in



various trash bins. They hope with this direct action to fix this maladministration. They want a house to realize artistic work. The building is ideally located in downtown Essen. The architecture also is ideal: 200 single rooms on six floors for studios, dance rooms, film & photo, and much more. It also has a party room. And the doors were unlocked! Now the occupiers invite the different parties (government asset management, a trade union group) to join in a negotiation to reach a point of legal certainty so the artists can use the building. The gallery in the building is open from Sunday, July 18th, between 4 and 8pm. The public is invited to view the exhibition, hear music, and talk to the occupiers.

The group is Freiraum2010 (Free Space 2010). Reported on lists, and at: just.blogsport.de/2010/07/19/hausbesetzung-in-essen/ – this is a bulletin on a Berlin-based urban art blog. They were evicted.

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Paths Through Utopia, a film by Isabelle Fremeaux and John Jordan, 2011

The project was a six month journey through Europe in search of ways of living despite capitalism. Out of the journey arose a blog, a book, a Utopian Road movie (more fiction than documentary) and a series of workshops & performances. Paths Through Utopias are trails drawn by realist dreamers, lucid idealists whose vision of a better world is not projected into an unreachable future but created every day, in the here and now. These paths are not motorways destroying forests to get to a pre-decided destination as fast and as straight as possible... they are trails following the valleys’ contours, tracing the rivers and desires of those who build them.

– labofii.net

“Politics is not solely, or even primarily, about reasoned thinking and rational choices; it’s an affair of fantasy and desire. People are rarely moved to action, support, or even consent by realistic proposals; they are motivated by dreams of what could be.”

– Steven Duncombe

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Gängeviertel – Or contemporary art in progress

April, 2011 by Kyra Garske

In the middle of Hamburg, in one of the countless office districts made out of glass and steel there is the Gängeviertel. Between Valentinskamp, Caffamacherreihe and Speckstraße are 12 houses with historically worthwhile, extensively original old building substances. Many artists squatted the district and live and work there. Almost every night there are events like concerts, readings, exhibitions, installation and performances – all for FREE! You can visit the buildings from inside daily from 13:00 (except Mondays). The people there are very friendly and open-minded, can give you loads of information and tea. Discover the different houses and rooms: Puppenstube (dollhouse), Butze (cubby), Tischlerei (carpentry), Fabrik (factory), Druckerei (printing house), Kutscherhaus (coachmen house), Kupferdiebe and Speckstraße. The Gängeviertel is not only AGAINST everything, they have a new concept, a new

use zoning plan. You can find very in detail on www.gaengeviertel.info (click on Nutzungskonzept). I stop here to explain more about that beautiful, creative place – KOMM IN DIE GÄNGE – get on with it – get your own picture of it – your own view – ask and talk about what you think.

– from “Spotted by Locals,” a website for tourist — spottedbylocals.com/hamburg/gaengeviertel/

Commercial Social Media Bites Back

50 UK Anti-Cuts Groups Axed by Facebook in Honor of the British Monarchy: Open Birkbeck, UWE Occupation, Chesterfield Stopthecuts, Camberwell AntiCuts, IVA Womensrevolution, Tower Hamlets Greens, No Cuts, ArtsAgainst Cuts, London Student Assembly, Beat’n Streets, Roscoe ’Manchester’ Occupation, Bristol Bookfair, Newcastle Occupation, Socialist Unity, Whospeaks Forus, Ourland FreeLand, Bristol Ukuncut, Teampalestina Shaf, Notts-Uncut Part-of UKUncut, No Quarter Cutthear, Bootle Labour, Claimants Fightback, Ecosocialists Unite, Comrade George Orwell, Jason Derrick, Anarchista Rebellionist, BigSociety Leeds, Slade Occupation, Anti-Cuts Across Wigan, Firstof Mayband, Don’t Break Britain United, Cockneyreject, SWP Cork, Westminster Trades Council, York Anarchists, Rock War, Sheffield Occupation, Central London SWP, North London Solidarity, Southwark Sos, Save NHS, Rochdale Law Centre, Goldsmiths Fights Back

– from *Occupy Everything*, posted by Cara Baldwin, May 1st, 2011

Vienna WUK – Workshop and Culture House

The autonomous cultural center WUK (short for Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus) in Vienna is one of the biggest in Europe. The place “is rooted in the ideas and demands of the ’70s for spaces to enable contemporary cultural activities” (from the WUK website). In his online video project “In Between the Movements,” Martin Krenn examines WUK together with philosopher Gerald Raunig. This 2008 discussion between Raunig and Krenn is in German subtitled in English. It begins with a primer on Félix Guattari’s idea of transversality, which arose out of his observations on the structure of power in his mental clinic. Specifically, the concept seeks to identify a flow of power outside of vertical hierarchies and horizontal forces. Then Gerald and Martin walk through the rooms of the free school of WUK, talking about the way that school worked democratically between the interests of teachers, parents and students.

From the contradictions of this school, Raunig talks then of the “rule of forced self-administration” – in order to participate, one must attend the meetings where decisions are made. This is a key part of “instituent practice,” the arising of movement-based institutions. He notes the divide between two Vienna squats, the autonomous Ernst Kirchwegger Haus and the institutionalized WUK. These two are antagonists: one is “good” since it accords with revolutionary principles, whereas the other is “bad” since it accords with neo-liberal civic transformations. (And, in other contexts, e.g., Zurich, one is “good” because it plays by the rules, and the other is “bad” because it’s illegal, and therefore subject to state repression.)

Raunig wants to dissolve this dichotomy, to reconcile the two positions, so that both are seen as movements, as part of the “machinization” of Deleuze and Guattari. The radical anarchist “position,” that “a movement without institutionalization exists,” is not really at odds with the position that small scale “civil society institutions” could exist, and then create the “big Other of institutions.” Rebels will always need lawyers. And without direct action,

we wouldn’t have any autonomous spaces to embrace or resist institutionalization. – AWM

Martin Krenn, “In Between the Movements” -- *in-between-the-movements.net*; WUK – wuk.at/language/en-us/wuk

Robert Jasper Grootveld (Amsterdam, 19 July 1932 – 26 February 2009) was a Dutch artist best known for his events on the Spui in Amsterdam. Grootveld’s ‘happenings’ were a forerunner of the Provo movement, which he later joined. Beginning in 1964 he staged anti-smoking happenings at the Het Lieverdje (“The Little Darling”) statue in Amsterdam, after discovering that it had been donated to the city by a tobacco company. Grootveld would appear at midnight on Saturdays, strangely attired, and dance around the statue in a cloud of his own cigarette smoke, calling out all sorts of incantations, like “Uche, uche, uche” (coughing sounds), and “Klaas komt.” This last, meaning “Klaas is Coming!” became a familiar graffiti around the city. At the core of Grootveld’s philosophy was the belief that the masses had been brainwashed into becoming a herd of addicted consumers. The young Novems, a Dutch subculture, were attracted to the street theatre. Grootveld also inspired some intellectuals with his innovative methods of communication. Roel van Duyn, observing the potential of provocative street actions to alter society, began to distribute a magazine called *Provo* at these events.

– from *Wikipedia.org* // reference: “History of the Provos,” High Times, January 1990 // from *Wikipedia.org*



A major biography of Grootveld has recently appeared in Dutch by Eric Duivenvoorden (titled *Magiër van een nieuwe t d: het leven van Robert Jasper Grootveld*, or “Magician of a new time: the life of RJG”). Duivenvoorden organized the squatting archives at the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, and wrote the script for “The City Was Ours” (*De Stad Was van Ons*), a documentary of the squatting movement of the 1970s-80s. Talk around the bar at Joe’s Garage when Grootveld’s name was brought up elicited second hand tales of an old man who terrorized his attendants in the nursing home with projectile vomiting. Alan Smart, who interviewed him, said that despite some bizarre late episodes the artist remained sharp as a tack on questions of fact.

“Immigrant Punk”

Upon arriving to the melting pot
I get penciled in as a goddamn white
Now that I am categorized
Officer gets me naturalized

Now that I’m living up in God knows where
Sometime it gets hard without a friend
But as I am lurking around
Hoptza, I see another immigrant punk

There is a little punk rock mafia
Everywhere you go
She is good to me and I am good to her
Legalize me, realize me

Despite the living up in U.S.A.
I’m still holding up in all my ways
I gotta friends, we gotta band
We still make sound you can’t stand

Without banging on some big old pot
Without getting out of bed
But I’m relaxed, I’m just lurking around
Hoptza, I see another immigrant punk

There is a little punk rock mafia
Everywhere you go
She is good to me and I am good to her
Legalize me, realize me, party

Of course we immigrants wanna sing all night long
Don’t you know the singing salves the troubled soul?
So I’m relaxed, I’m just lurking around

I got a method and you don’t
You got a dictionary kicking around?
Look up the immigrant, immigrant, immigrant punk

*ca. 2006 — from the Gogol Bordello :album “Gypsy Punks:
Underdog World Strike”
Songwriters: Rea Mochiach; Yuri Lemshev; Eliot Ferguson; Oren
Kaplan; Sergey Ryabtzev; Eugene Hütz*



logo of the Umsonstladen kiosk
(free store),



The “book bloc” in London, 2010. This is a viral activism of painted sign/shields credited to the Onda (Wave) student movement of Italy in 2008. (Slogans: “We won’t pay for your crisis!” and “If you block our future we’ll block the city!”) Uniriot.org made the instructional video; the Wu Ming authors’ collective wrote of the practice, “books themselves are fighting the police.”

A Stay at the Rote Insel in Berlin

Finding the Rote Insel in Schöneberg from Tegel airport at night proved a little tricky. Two bus drivers gave me wrong steers, so I ended up heading to Mitte, to the huge City Hostel. Even in the morning I succeeded in making every wrong turn – on the last, out of the Metro, I passed a new “bio-café” and co-working space, and then a lot of anarchist graffiti on the railway overpass, defiant billboards, discolored with age from the rusty trestles, some still deformed with slugs from the war. Finally I find the Rote Insel – hard to miss it with its 5-story high murals. M---, my host is awaiting me on the street – I called from a nearby locutorio – and he lets me into the big double apartment building. It’s a real warren of units, tidy but rundown in German *deshabille*. The guest room is really big, with mattresses for a dozen people in a loft above a room full of couches. With a poster of masked street fighters at Leon Cavallo CSOA on the wall, the place feels like an anti-capitalist wartime home. Over coffee, M--- laments that the movement is in decline. Yorckstraße in the past had some 90 squats, and now almost none remain. With anemic squat defense, the squats have been picked off one by one. The Kreuzberg squatters deplore the “Schwabens,” tourists with big sunglasses. They are eager to photograph the remnants of oppo-culture, but their attention is denaturing it, turning it into spectacle.

There are a few guests already staying there, a guy from Istanbul and two from Euskadi, Basque country. The big room must be vacated that night at 6pm for the assembly, 24 people in all, who make up the house. I will present my project, and ask for permission to photograph the walls of the house. Tomorrow night the rest of the SQEK crew of researchers arrives – Miguel and Elly from Spain, Lynn from Vermont, Thomas and Margot from Paris, and Edward from London. Others are staying in hotels...

On the night of the Rote Insel VoKü (Volks Küchen, People’s Kitchens), several members of the Rote Insel told us the story of their house. The twin buildings were squatted in 1981. At that time, in West Berlin, there were 180 squats. Some were in Schöneberg (the district was called the “Rote Insel” for the radical workers



living there[?]), but most were in Kreuzberg. These were occupied by young people and students. This house had many different people in what were really two separate buildings. In 1984, this was the last squatted house to make contact with the owner. The government made a program then to support squats with money, up to 85%. The city became the owner of our house, and we had nine months to get a contract with a construction company to make the improvements. We went from 1984-87 on one-year contracts. We needed that long a time to get a reconstruction contract. We were 20 young people with lots of problems, so it took a long time. The government then was putting a lot of money into calming the movement. We had two architects, an electrician, a carpenter, and a person to make the paperwork – and 20 people making their own house. For some time, they all lived in half of the building; 25 people had only one small kitchen. There were many discussions about the work, and sharing the load. Our first contract went until 1997. The current contract expires in 2017. The city gave many houses away to private companies because they didn’t want to pay the costs of administration. Berlin was a city state inside the DDR (communist East Germany), and they had lots of money to distribute. “With this money they could bring down the movement.” [I wonder how the Haffenstrasse squatters got legalized in Hamburg?] Also happened in Freiburg and Frankfurt. [Freiburg where the new mode of co-op collective home-buying is coming from.] To get a contract we had to have an official association. We joined with a youth center nearby which helped us in order to get this contract. The youth center also began in an occupation. They still have a project of car repair from those days.

The Rote Insel is self-managed. The assembly meets every two weeks. The rules of the house are no violence. Problems are resolved by talking. If you live here you must do something for the house. It’s not fixed – everyone determines what he or she is going to do. It is made by social pressure and reputation. Some do more, some less, some nothing. We have in the past evicted people. At



MediaSpree action in Berlin, 2009



Billboard for the "No Wave Squatter Punk" show at Rote Flora, Hamburg, March 2011

the end of the 1980s, we had some problems with heroin addiction. The playground next to us was a hotspot for drug dealing. Now Tacheles is still a place where you can get any drug you want. There are rumors that in the 1980s the prices for heroin were the lowest ever. Some suspect that this was in order to crush the movements. We made a policy that addicts had to go out. We are self-managed, so we make the rules. We don't ever have legal problems. Everyone who has lived here has accepted it. ? It's always a question of how you keep the rules of the house. No opiates. Anyone we see with small beady eyes – [gestures "out"].

The bar is a private club. People here are guests, friends, so no official rules apply. It is a private club, but it is publicized through the Stressfaktor [calendar for left subculture and politics]. We have a bicycle workshop. Kids can come and do their own repairs. The publicity on this is informal. Our collective can't support the workshop as an open public project. Our silkscreen workshop is "a little bit sleepy" because people don't work on it. It depends on private interest: who is here, and what they offer to do. The bar collective can be approached to do parties or concerts. We make pizza there on Fridays. There is also a rehearsal room where bands play for the cost of electricity. [Members speak German, English and Spanish.] We have people here who have no working papers and can't pay rent. But they must stay in contact, and open up their problems to the house. During the '80s a Besetzenrat [squatters' council] existed, but with the era of contracts the organization was broken. Now there is a syndikat, or association, to help houses to get legal help, but not to move into private ownership. A GmbH (limited liability company) buys 49% of the shares in a house.

[M--- shows a chart.] It is a decentralized structure of money that cannot be broken if one house goes down. So there will never be an owner who can sell it.

M--- outlined a bit the movement of squatting in Berlin. For two or three years there has been an attempt to evict the Köpi [Köpinicker Straße 137]. The "wir bleiben alle" [We all stay] campaign was strong for a couple of years, then it was dropped. The structure here is inclined to be dependent on personalities. The first wave of squatting was in the 1980s. The second wave was in the '90s, from 1989-92, in the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte. In 1992 the riotous eviction of the Mainzer Straße squats took place. (See article this issue.) At that time, sexism was the issue dividing the movement, especially when a leading political man was accused of rape. Now the divide is over the Israel-Palestine issue, which emerged in the mid-1990s in the "antifa" [anti-fascist] movement as the "anti-Deutsch" position. [This anti-nationalism has been called by some "ethno-masochist," and involves unconditional support for Israel.] Now the only consensus is to stand against evictions and repression. A musical tour circuit works through private contacts. They are not really working with political parties. There is also a division over the vegan question.

The most lively movement now is probably Media Spree – there again is a personality up front. This concerns gentrification in Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain, as the riverside land on the Spree has been sold off. That movement has itself split, with one side going with the Green party and the left, and the other holding to an Autonomist position and disturbing the process.

[transcribed from handwritten notes onsite, March 2011]

Regenbogen Fabrik – the Rainbow Factory

Everyone is gathered in the center of the courtyard, around Andy, a smiling older man wrapped in what looks like a red Sandinista neckerchief. We are waiting for the tour arranged for the SQEK meeting in Berlin to begin. Carla MacDougall is translating. Children are playing in the yard, mothers coming and going. There is some changing of the guard there, as one period of time in the kita (children's place) is ending and another beginning.

Andy was born in Kreuzberg. The Regenbogen Fabrik has been around since 1981. He intends to give us something like a history of the Kreuzberg squatting scene and what is left today. In the 1960s and '70s, Kreuzberg was an urban renewal area. There were plans for a highway, a "clear cut urban renewal" to tear down existing housing. In the 1970s this housing was beaten down and mostly abandoned. Speculators were hovering around, and they wanted Kreuzberg to be torn down. Many of the tenants were organizing, and there were a number of rent strikes.

The Kotbusser Tor area was torn down and redeveloped. The buildings in Kreuzberg had only a few remaining tenants. Most took money to move out. U.S. soldiers stationed in Berlin practiced urban warfare tactics in the rundown mostly abandoned area. (Andy showed us photographs of this.) In the late 1970s, around 1979, people began to renovate houses in protest against the government policy of abandonment. Until December 12, 1980 it wasn't really a movement per se. A squat here and there. But on that day police prevented a building from being squatted and there was a riot. It lasted three days, and marked the start of a movement.

There was a background of corruption in the municipal government. There was a housing shortage in Berlin, and many of the buildings in Kreuzberg were standing empty. After three days of riots the police said they would no longer evict people. Eighteen houses were squatted that month. By March 120. And by May of 1981, 160 to 170 houses had been squatted.

The movement as it grew had mixed motives. It was against the housing policies of the city, for collective living and working, with political intention, etc. For some people it was about getting an apartment. At the Regenbogen Fabrik you have workshops so people could work collectively. For others political issues were most important, for people in the larger left alternative scene, the peace movement, anti-war, etc.

This is the Rainbow Factory. The back house was also squatted. Some people from the 1981 action still live there. (He shows pictures around the group of the rundown ruined group of shacks it was in 1981.) The ground was totally contaminated, so it all had to be dug out and removed. The first squatters were single mothers and people involved in labor union movements and the radical left scene. Most were drawing social welfare money. Those who were here to study in Berlin stopped their studies and picked them up again ten years later.

What were the motives of those first squatters? It was difficult to find an apartment with only one child. Some wanted to raise their children collectively. Some wanted to work collectively. This is how



they envisioned their living situation. The original idea was to have a neighborhood center.

Now he will talk about how it used to be. This factory was built in 1878. In Kreuzberg, buildings then often had a factory behind

them. This land is close to the canal. This was a steam-powered sawmill. The chimney remains. The squatters see it as a monument to that period, and saw themselves as contributing to the preservation of these historic buildings. Then the place became a chemical factory and made paint. It closed in 1978. The ground was contaminated.

The first thing they did when they squatted the place was to hold a neighborhood party. Just recently, they held the 30th anniversary of this party. There was more citizen participation then than there is now. Now the area is more commercial. Now they like more to do a street party.

The people who squatted here were open to negotiation. They worked with the neighborhood center and politicians. In the early 1980s scene that was a big issue. The bicycle workshop was a successful negotiating point. People could help themselves to build and repair their bicycles. This was a popular idea in Kreuzberg. A lot of the bicycle workshops became shops, but this one is still as it was, collectively organized. You think of Berlin now as a bicycle city. Then it wasn't, but in Kreuzberg it was because the Berlin Wall interrupted car traffic in this district.

The cinema or kino was originally a space for parties. There was a fire probably set by neo-Nazis, and it had to be fixed up again.

A question: What about the negotiations? How quickly was the squat legalized? It was squatted in 1981, and in 1984, the agreement came. The Alternative List (AL) got many votes in Kreuzberg. AL's first political position was the buildings commissioner. A man named Orlovsky was politicized because the Kreuzberg Center built near the Kotbusser Tor cut off his business from the street. The house was owned by a private investor until 1990. In 1991 they decided to resquat it. Now the district of Kreuzberg owns it.

The squatters were supposed to pay rent, but they didn't. Now the 25 and 30 year contracts are expiring, just as they are in Amsterdam. The city is setting onerous conditions for a new contract. An extended soil removal [for the contamination] was required, very expensive. The group refused.

[We move to the cinema, a large long clean room, with a bar along one side. It is painted a dark color, with raised banks of couches, big upholstered sofas going up towards the projection room.]

The principle of the squats was to do what people wanted to do, what was fun for them. So here people organized to show films that they wanted to see. There were many cinemas in squats. Also in the east, many squats had cinemas in them. The kino group are all volunteers. They also welcome initiatives from the outside, particularly political initiatives. They can show 16mm, 35mm and they have a beamer for digital content.

The hostel and the cafe (formerly a VoKu) on the street are the two money-making projects of the Regenbogen Fabrik.

[Transcribed from handwritten notes, March 2011]

Autonomy!

by Ashley Dawson

A recollection of Mainzer Strasse and the book Autonomia: Post-Political Politics, edited by Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi

Before the book, a place and time: Berlin, summer, 1990. Or actually, the road to Berlin. I'd spent the last two days on the move, hitchhiking without sleep to get from Amsterdam to Berlin. I was delirious, having spent hours talking to a Dutch businessman who spewed a stream of racist bile about Muslims taking over his country and an even longer time with an Italian truck driver who insisted that he was carrying a large consignment of weapons for the Sicilian mafia. Beggars can't be choosers. Night blurred into day and back again. Now I was on the final leg of the journey, crammed into a dilapidated Opel with a disheveled elevator salesman and his advertising gear. The highway ran like an artery of light through what I knew was the pitch-black East German countryside. Groggy with sleep, I struggled to keep up



a conversation with the driver. The surreal sense of being deep under water I felt coming over me was brought up short when we pulled into a grimy gas station glued to the dark margin of the highway. As I got out to stretch I saw the East German soldiers, their machine guns pointing at the ground, standing around smoking cigarettes.

The next day, after crashing on the floor of friends of friends in West Berlin, I made my way across the city to Checkpoint Charlie. As I approached the crossing on the elevated metro line, I saw the graffiti-covered remnants of the wall and, equally oppressive, the huge gash running through the center of the city, an ominous blank space carved out for hundreds of feet

on either side of the wall to ensure maximum visibility of escapees. At Checkpoint Charlie, the wall was no longer intact, but the guard tower from which East German security once watched over and at times killed their compatriots, was still there. I walked through the crossing, feeling as if history was turning upside down on my way to Mainzer Strasse.

During the Cold War, Berlin was the only city in which young West German men could escape mandatory military service. Supported by the Allies as a symbol of resistance to communism, the city ironically became a haven for West German dissidents and a forcing house for the diverse social movements that came to be known as the *Autonomen*: anti-war, anti-racist, feminist, environmentalist and many other strands of the German extra-parliamentary Left who retained strong links with the traditions of direct, participatory democracy pioneered by the New Left during the late 1960s and by subsequent radical tendencies such as the Greens. The *Autonomen* were concentrated in the relatively poor, heavily Turkish neighborhood of Kreuzberg, which, during the Cold War, was located in the far eastern section of West Berlin. After the wall was torn down in November, 1989, the *Autonomen* moved east into neighborhoods where huge numbers of late nineteenth century apartment buildings had been left vacant by the East German government whose plans to demolish them and build hideous tower blocks in their place had been scuttled by the collapse of communism. Now, West Germans and East Germans, as well as radicals from Italy, Japan, Peru, and other points around the world, joined to occupy over a hundred buildings in the neighborhood just across the River Spree from Kreuzberg.

Mainzer Strasse was special, though. Most squats were isolated, or existed in clumps of two or three houses. On Mainzer Strasse, an entire block of twelve abandoned tenement buildings had been occupied. There was an *Autonomen* movie theater; several infoshops distributing radical zines, books, and films; separate gay and lesbian houses; and *Autonomen* cafés and bars, each with decoration more imaginat-



tive than the next—my favorite was the wedding themed bar in the lesbian house, with a gigantic white wedding bed that seated at least twenty people. The reputation of Mainzer Strasse had travelled all the way to the United States; friends told me that I had to go to on a pilgrimage to the place while I was in Germany to polish my language skills before taking the mandatory exams in grad school.

After walking through seemingly endless streets filled with once elegant but now ramshackle five-story apartment buildings, I finally turned into Mainzer Strasse. After walking past several houses that seemed completely uninhabited, I stopped in front of one with a bright purple façade where two young guys were sitting in the sun playing chess. Biting the bullet, I blurted out an awkward hello in German and then explained in English that I was in Berlin for the summer and wondered if they had a place for me to stay. Neither seemed particularly nonplussed by what seemed to me a ridiculously bold and invasive request. Oliver turned with an amused look on his face to Mischa and said that he thought they probably had room. Mischa replied that yes they probably did, but they'd have to ask the house council if I could stay. I sat around watching them play chess and smoke hand-rolled cigarettes with exotic Dutch tobacco. They seemed quite personable and we talked about where I was from and what I wanted to do during the summer.

This information came in handy a couple of hours later when they put my case to the house council. Even though I was in Berlin to polish my German, I didn't understand much of the business conducted at the council, which took place in a volatile mix of West German, East German, and international *Autonomen* argot. The mixture of people from both parts of the country—so soon after the dismantling of the wall—was impressive, as was the pretty

even mix of men and women in the squat. I felt distinctly uneasy, though, when discussion turned to my application to be a member of the house and I felt people's eyes on me. Oliver whispered to me that things were going relatively well, although there was quite a lot of suspicion of an unknown outsider like me since the "Osi's" had grown up subjected to the pervasive spy network of the hated Stasi, the East German secret police, and the "Wesi's" had been battling the authorities' anti-squatter moves for much of the last decade. Perhaps equally worrying, I was an "Ami," a citizen of the universally hated imperialist power across the Atlantic. But though I felt nervous, I also felt elated: this was my first experience of radical participatory democracy in a commune.

My application for membership approved by consensus by the house council, it was time for me to learn the ropes in the commune. Mischa took me to see my room, which faced onto the backyard of the building, beyond which lay a cemetery studded with beautiful cypress trees. My room was on the first floor of the building, and consequently abutted onto an imposing steel security door that clamped down with a huge wheel across the stairway leading up from the ground floor café to the rest of the house. The whole affair seemed rather like something one might encounter on a submarine or in a space station. There was a buzzer system that allowed people to get in after curfew each night. Mischa explained to me that just recently a group of neo-Nazis had broken into a nearby house and savagely beaten some *Autonomen* living there. Neo-Nazis who'd squatted a house in a nearby neighborhood also apparently liked to blast down our street in their jeep, firing flare guns into the houses. Mischa told me that sentries were posted with walkie-talkies at either end of Mainzer Strasse, and that the *Autonomen* were worried that they'd be attacked by a mob of either neo-Nazis or police sometime soon.

Needless to say, I had trouble going to sleep. Although I eventually dropped off, I woke in horror in the middle of the night to a deafening clanging on the steel security door. After nearly pissing myself with fear, I eventually realized that the clanging wasn't the noise of someone trying to dismantle the door

but rather of someone patiently trying to wake the evening sentry up and get into the house. But this was cold comfort—perhaps it was a neo-Nazi trap! Eventually someone else woke up and came down the stairs cursing in colorful German. It turned out that the person whose turn it was to keep the buzzer in their room had closed it out on the landing and gone to sleep, leaving a partygoer to wake half the house in order to get in.

The next morning, while I was eating breakfast, Oliver asked me if I'd like to come to a protest against the neo-Nazis. This seemed like a good idea after the terrible night I'd had! When I agreed, Oliver asked me if I had a motorcycle helmet with me. Sure, didn't he see the motorcycle in my backpack yesterday? Okay, no problem, but bring your passport with you in case you're arrested, he said—you don't want to get stuck in an East German jail with no identification.

As *Autonomen* gathered for the march, I saw that Oliver hadn't just been trying to wind up the new Ami housemate. Dressed almost exclusively in black, the *Autonomen* around me really were gearing themselves up with helmets and other homemade riot gear. The march nevertheless set off towards the neo-Nazi squats with a remarkably carnivalesque air. When we got to the street occupied by the fascists, though, we found that a convoy of East German police trucks was blocking the way. This, Oliver told me, was typical. Since the wall came down, neo-Nazi movements had sprung up across Germany. Judges sentenced perpetrators of increasingly-frequent attacks on immigrants to short jail terms or light fines, while the Social Democrats had joined with conservatives to deport tens of thousands of Roma and help rewrite the country's constitution to seal the borders to political refugees. The *Autonomen*, growing out

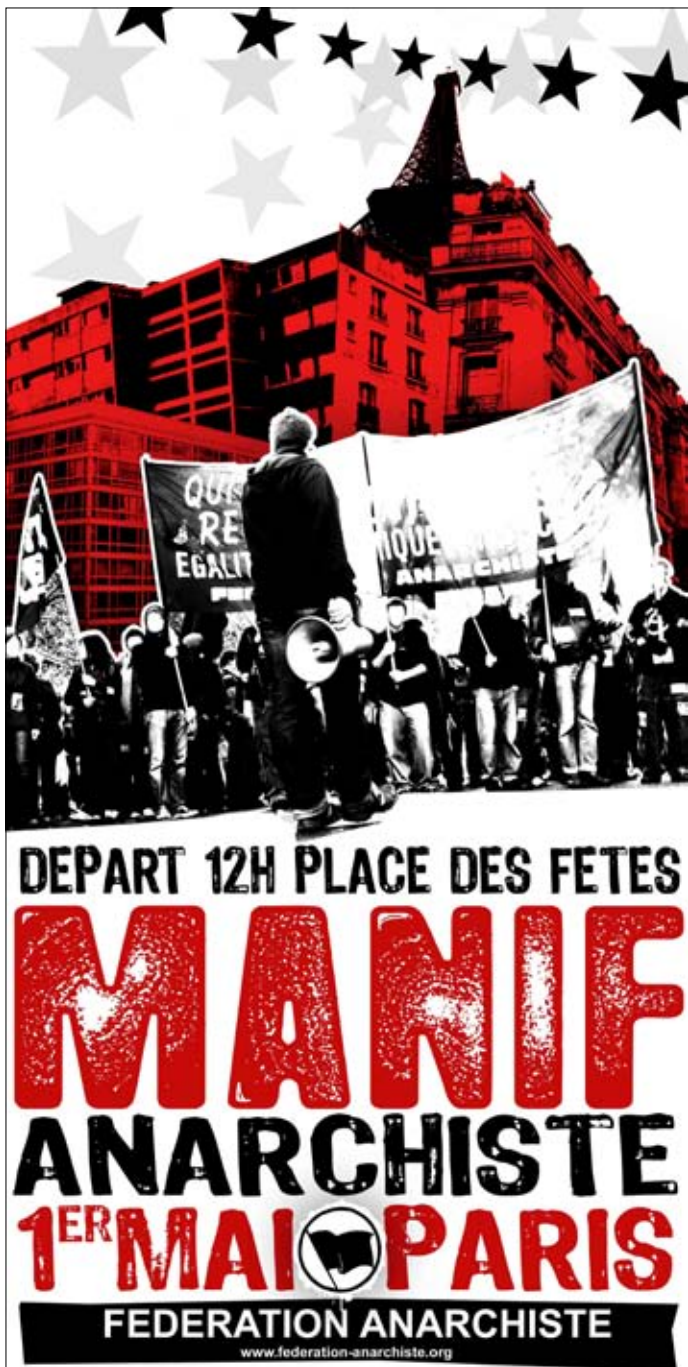
of an anti-imperialist movement and very much aware of their links with the German Left in the 1930s, sought to protect Roma and other immigrants from the marauding neo-Nazis, but, unlike the neo-Nazis, they were violently repressed by the police on both sides of the old border. For the *Autonomen*, the East German *volkspolizei* or people's police lined up in front of them were supporting the fascists by defending their squat.

While most of the *Autonomen* marched past hurling only jeers, a group clad in helmets and leather jackets waded into the cops with the pipes and trash can lids they'd brought along for the occasion. This most militant segment of the black bloc seemed a pretty even match for the relatively lightly armed East German police. Soon, though, the melee heated up as Molotov cocktails went flying and police trucks caught on fire. In the United States, of course, the police would have just shot the "terrorists." But instead, the thin green line of East German police held fire and held firm, the neo-Nazi squats remained safe, and the march moved on. I was shocked by the violence, but appreciated the willingness of the *Autonomen* to put their bodies on the line to challenge the Nazis. After being attacked a number of times by skinheads during the course of the summer, I came to understand the *Autonomen's* militant attitude a bit more.

We marched on towards a complex of housing blocks where Vietnamese immigrant workers had been living in terror for months, unable to get back to their country and repeatedly attacked by the neo-Nazis. Along the way to these tower blocks, the marchers stopped briefly to torch a truck filled with cigarettes from a recently arrived Western corporate cigarette company. After a buoyant march through the dreary concrete jungle of outer

East Berlin, an *Autonomen* delegation peeled off to meet with representatives of the Vietnamese workers and to express solidarity with their struggle against racism in the new Germany. As the balmy summer afternoon wore down, the *Autonomen* dispersed, with clumps of black-clad men and women waving flags of the former German Democratic Republic, the bottom golden stripe ripped out to leave only black





and red stripes over the embossed hammer, compass, and grain insignia of worker, farmer, and intellectual unity.

Now we go to Tacheles, Oliver told me. Located in the once predominantly Jewish neighborhood of Berlin Mitte, and subsequently used by the Nazis to house French prisoners of war, Tacheles was a hulking derelict former department store that had been occupied by *Autonomen* a scant three months after the wall came down. Tacheles had blossomed into a community arts center, and now boasted scores of artists' workshops, exhibition spaces, a bar, and a movie theater. The building itself

was a labyrinthine gaping wound. Once the entrance to the Friedrichstadt-Passage, a shopping complex akin to the covered shops written about by Walter Benjamin, Tacheles featured historically important early steel architecture, but had been partially demolished by penniless communist functionaries after World War II and was slated for final demolition in spring of 1990. The *Autonomen* blocked this demolition and created a vibrant space for experiments in communal living and aesthetics.

When we arrived at Tacheles, the sun was just beginning to set. The entire back wall of the building had been removed,

leaving its rooms exposed like a giant honeycomb. This particular evening an Irish performance artist had spread canvas from floor to ceiling in each room. Inside each room she had stationed a slide projector; each projector was in turn wired to a central computer control. She had created a gigantic version of one of Nam June Paik's video installations. The net effect was a mesmerizing collage of coruscating images, sometimes flashing in completely disconnected rhythms, sometimes composing themselves into a single six-story canvas, all in time to music played by a jazz band in the massive courtyard behind Tacheles. Oliver gestured to me, and we began climbing up the scaffolding attached to the outside of the building, the giant images flashing in front of our faces as we climbed. When we got half way up, we turned around, twined our legs round the scaffolding, and sat watching the sun go down over a free Berlin.

• • •

When I returned to grad school at the end of that summer, I found myself studying with quite a few colorful professors, but Sylvère Lotringer was one of the more memorable. He was teaching a class on mutant French theory: Bataille, Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari during their polymorphous perversity phase. At the time he was helping a member of the Black Panthers who'd just been released from jail put together a collection justifying the party line. When Lotringer heard that I had been living with the *Autonomen* in Berlin and that I spoke Italian, he immediately gave me a dog-eared copy of his journal *Semiotext(e)* from the late 1970s. The theme of the journal: *Autonomia*.

Autonomia, which has recently been reissued in the *Semiotext(e)* Foreign Agents series, contains the collective efforts of intellectuals active in radical Italian organizations such as *Lotta Continua* [struggle continues] and *Potere Operaio* [workers' power] to gain a theoretical grip on events during the country's *anni di piombo* or "years of lead," when the nation was convulsed by a startling variety of extra-Parliamentary radical movements. In the mid-1970s, the Italian Communist Party (PCI), repudiating Soviet dogmatism, had forged a "historic compromise" with the country's long-serving, endemically corrupt Christian Democrats. It thus fell to the PCI to discipline increasingly restive workers during the first major economic downturn of the post-war period. Workers began organizing autonomously of the Communist-



controlled labor unions, engaging in spontaneous actions to shorten the work week, to overturn management control in workplaces, and to demand higher wages, all by organizing in workplace councils.

Even more alarmingly for authorities, social struggles began to move out of the factory, with *autoriduzione* (auto-reduction) movements coping with the rising cost of living by collectively determining a reduced price to pay for public services, transportation, housing, electricity, and groceries. In addition, sectors of the population invisible to traditional Marxist theory began to assert themselves. Groups like *Rivolta Femminile* challenged the patriarchal values that pervaded Italian society in general, but also the workers' movement and the PCI. Feminists introduced new styles of organizing in small groups with horizontal links rather than the top-down vanguard style of many traditional vanguard groups, and pioneered fresh discursive and decision-making strategies based on open general assemblies and consensus. In tandem, youth movements began to assert their right to the autonomous self-governance of education. A vibrant, playful counter-culture quickly developed in Italy's major cities that struggled to build *centri sociali* (autonomous social centers) where young people could escape the oppressive confines of the patriarchal family and carve out a vision of community outside the alienating confines of the mass consumerist society of the spectacle.

The articles collected in *Autonomia* track and attempt to theorize these polymorphous Italian social struggles. Writers such as Mario Tronti, Sergio Bologna, and, of course, Toni Negri articulate the tenets of *operaismo* (workerism), the theoretical approach to conceptualizing autonomous

Socialism or Barbarism had been influenced by the investigations of wildcat strikes in American auto plants carried out by the Johnson-Forest Tendency, a dissident Trotskyist group founded by Trinidadian polymath C.L.R. James and Russian exile Raya Dunayevskaya. Writing in journals such as *Quaderni Rossi*, Negri and his colleagues challenged the hierarchical tenets of Marxist-Leninist theory, focusing instead on the "spontaneous" forms of shop floor organizing evolving in sites such as FIAT's giant car factory on the outskirts of Turin. *Operaismo* theorists also revamped classical Marxist theories of value by arguing that in modern societies wealth was produced increasingly through "immaterial" or "social" labor—the collective work of social reproduction carried on outside the wage relation by women, students, the unemployed, etc. Although it remained grounded in theories of class struggle, *operaismo* expanded the definition of the working class to include many of the social movements that were transforming the political landscape of Italy during the 1970s. Italian *Autonomia* had a dramatic impact in Germany, helping to catalyze the movement in which I participated in Mainzer Strasse.

Looking back at *Autonomia* from my current vantage point—which coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall and the tenth anniversary of the Battle of Seattle—I'm struck by the germinative character of these theoretical labors. Not that they lack flaws: as its name suggests, *operaismo* retained an emphasis on production that ineluctably marginalized many of the issues around which social movements such as feminism and the youth counter-culture mobilized. In addition, the theorists of *Autonomia* remained relatively

worker activism developed in Italy during the struggles of the late 1960s and 1970s. The *operaismo* analysts drew in their work on a long tradition of radical theory, the most prominent branch of which led back to France's Socialism or Barbarism Group, where Cornelius Castoriadis had first articulated notions of workers' autonomy. In turn,

silent on the unfolding new international division of labor. This perhaps helps to explain the blindness in Toni Negri's subsequent attempt to theorize Empire as a decentered, all-pervasive force that leaves accounts of nation-state-centered imperialism in the dustbin of history. The Iraq War put an end to such modish pomo accounts of power. Nevertheless, in their attempts to theorize new forms of grassroots organizing and to develop fresh theories of the production of value in contemporary capitalism, the work of the *Autonomia* theorists was prescient and remains valuable.

For all its faults, *Autonomia* has provided one of the most expansive theoretical frameworks for understanding the spontaneous, horizontal politico-social forms that I experienced among Berlin's *Autonomen* and that have since become a crucial feature of the global justice movement. While other theorists such as Manuel Castells also tracked the development of grassroots struggles in urban locations around the world, few have reinvigorated historical materialism and provided the framework for conceptualizing fresh efforts at organizing from below to the extent of *Autonomia*. Indeed, we might think of *Autonomia* as one of the most useful articulations of historical struggles that bind together such disparate phenomena as the *Autonomen* in Germany and other parts of northern Europe, the efforts of the Brazilian Workers' Party to establish participatory budgeting, the independent township groups of the Mass Democratic Movement that brought down apartheid in South Africa, and the struggle of the Zapatistas against neo-liberalism and for autonomous indigenous governance in the Lacandon jungle in southern Mexico.

The Mainzer Strasse commune I lived in no longer exists. Three months after my return to the United States, the Social Democratic government of Berlin sent in more than three thousand police, including SWAT teams, and smashed the *Autonomen* resistance. But while the Battle of Mainzer Strasse was lost, the struggle against the forms of dispossession and alienation imposed by neo-liberal capitalism lives on. All power to the communes!

—from the Nov 27th, 2009 Advocate graduate student newspaper of City University of New York; posted at gcadvocate.com/2009/11/autonomy/



Hamburg: Right to the City. The Congress. The Theses.

Nuclear fusion in image-city: The crises of the neoliberal city

Let us begin with the joyless one. And there is more than enough of it: The current urban development model tightens social fissions and segregations, produces spaces of exclusion, doorman-houses, creative quarters, business improvement districts, residence obligation, free trade areas, social hot spots, contaminated badlands. Let us start at the meta level to have a closer look at the city to analyse the interrelation between the global and the regional, between the inner and the outer urban and let us dissect the ideological layers of the neoliberal city.

Hostile embracement: participation & recuperation

Those in power respond to the increasing protests against neoliberal spatial politics with elaborated instruments: offers of cooperation set in frameworks defined from above here, reprisals there. Multicultural imagery in an image-pamphlet, controlling of migrants in the subway. Interactive art in Wilhelmsburg, obstruction of public referendums on the city level. Resistance itself is being depoliticised, culturalised, personalised and defused. How can we oppose this participatory cuddle-attack? Are there any ways out of the trap of recuperation?

PPP – pop, production, precarisation

Towards the end of the Industrial Age, cities gain importance as sites of production – this time of meanings, images, networks, attitudes, subcultures, which constitute the core of the new capitalistic creation of value. The “subjective factor”, once a feminist objection against the functional reduction of life and politics in the factory society, serves as the creative resource of the precarised “entrepreneurial self”. The latter depends on networked, open neighborhoods. These gentrified areas are the reverse image of the declining areas on the edge of the city – and even more, to the exploitative production of goods in the maquiladoras of the global South. Because their heavy labour, which is vital for everyday commodities at cutthroat prices, is the dark secret of the “creative class”.

Which new alliances offer possibilities of resistance in the fully integrated urban factory? What does a selforganized urban economy look like, that refuses to work as a partner in crime of global exploitation? An old promise lingers at the horizon: the appropriation of the means of production.

Tools, Tricks, Dances: Vive la Difference!

Cities are a condensation of differences. Sounds trivial, but marks a monumental break with political agendas which insist on homogeneity, fixed identities and clean classifications. The anti-gentrification debate is often criticized for an assumed xenophobia. But right-to-the-city-activists postulate the right for difference, for

deviance from behavioral and gender norms, for the right of unrestricted migration. How could an emancipatory practice look like, that accepts these differences, and that makes suppressed voices hearable – instead of excluding them? We perceive the multiplication of platforms of exchange and new ways of speaking at the latest captured places by right-to-the-city-activists. We are interested in practices, tools, tricks, spaces of collective self-organization, which leave the path of standardized forms of “plenum” or “demonstration”. How can we use different languages and forms of knowledge to learn from each other?

Access All Areas! Struggles for the right to the city

A short time ago, there seemed to be no foothold for resistance on the slippery terrain of post-fordism. But suddenly spatialized social struggles flare up and start to connect. Is this the outline of a new social movement?

When social questions are asked as spatial questions, they open up new possibilities for collective action: occupied spaces get linked with resistance against mega development projects, against gentrification, against privatization of public services. Artist collectives, small enterprises looking for work space, and unsatisfied tenants become companions.

Let's combine the appropriation of spaces and resources with the defense of inner-city neighborhoods against a policy of demolition! Let's combine the initiatives of homeless persons with the resistance against evictions! Let's strengthen tenant initiatives with vacancy campaigns! Let's connect the opponents of environmental degradation with the fights of immigrants for their right of residence! Let's broaden the space of action for civil disobedience by artistic and militant, clever and symbolic, virtual and direct actions!

Utopian spill-over: A city for all

Finally our most loved category: utopia! Henri Lefebvre writes, “there is no thinking without utopia, without exploring the possible, the elsewhere.” And because the impossible-possible shows through at some places, we want to encourage questions like: which strategies exist against the current social injustice? How can we take our right to the city? Can these fights be linked between cities, across countries and continents to create a powerful rhizome? How should transnational networks look like, when they are organized non-hierarchical and bottom up? How can urban resources and commons be distributed justly and sustainable? What happens, if the wishes leave the houses and walk the street...?

— *Hamburg June 2 - 5, 2011* // kongress.rechtaufstadt.net (german/english)

15

Two or Three Things I Heard About Provo

An impromptu soundtrack for W139, compiled and constructed by Experimental Jetset (2011).

PAM 7 PHLET

**Two or Three Things I Heard About Provo**

The sheet you are holding in your hands right now (or are looking at on a computer) is published as the accompanying text to a radio show taking place on Monday February 28, 2011, between 18:00 and 19:00 hrs. (Central European Time), broadcasted by Red Light Radio. The radio show is part of 'Two or Three Things I Know About Provo', an exhibition that runs from February 18 to March 13, 2011, at Amsterdam art space W139.

'Two or Three Things I Know About Provo' is a small, personal (and ultimately incomplete) archive of the Provo movement in Amsterdam (1965–1967), as well as a selection of documents related to various post-Provo activities (most notably Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt, 1967–1976), with a particular focus on the role of activist and printer Rob Stolk (1946–2001) in these movements. Intended as an impromptu installation, it was compiled and constructed by Experimental Jetset for W139.

SIDE A+B

The radio show you are listening to right now is meant as a auditive addition to the exhibition. Just as the installation at W139 is a posterwall of printed matter, we see this radio show as a posterwall of sound. A subjective and improvised archive of overlapping fragments, related to both the Provo and post-Provo movements. Whereas the printed matter displayed in the exhibition is all directly linked to Rob Stolk (he was a printer, after all), the tracks that make up this radio show are related to Rob in a much looser way. However, we do believe that it is the figure of Rob Stolk that holds all these fragments together.

Rob's activism was very much shaped by the notion of the 'free press', and this was the subject we tried to explore in our installation at W139. We are glad that we now have a chance, however briefly, to look into a related subject: that of 'free radio'. We like to thank W139 and Red Light Radio for the airtime.

An integral part of the installation is a series of seven printed pamphlets (numbered 0 to 6), that are distributed for free to the visitors of the show. Double-sided, A3-sized (and then folded to 105 x 297 mm), these pamphlets contain explanations, captions, credits and interviews. This document has been designed to fit into this series of pamphlets, that's why it is numbered 'Pamphlet 7'. We do think that this radio show can only be understood within the context of the actual installation at W139, and in relationship to the seven previous pamphlets. That's why we urge you to go to W139 before the exhibition is over (if you haven't seen it yet, that is).

Tracklist:**Side A: Provo (1965–1967)**

01. On Escalation (excerpt/edit) – Peter Schat
02. Report from 10 March, 1966
03. Litany for the 14th of June, 1966 (excerpt) – Willem Breuker / Orkest 66
04. Attentie (excerpt)
05. Dances from the Labyrinth (excerpt) – Peter Schat
06. Report from 10 March, 1966
07. On Escalation (excerpt) – Peter Schat
08. Provo in Frascati, 1966
09. Litany for the 14th of June, 1966 (excerpt) – Willem Breuker / Orkest 66
10. Jan Wolkers, 19 March, 1966
11. Life is Music is Love is All (excerpt) – Willem Breuker / Orkest 66
12. Report from Granada television, 1966 (Robert Jasper Grootveld)
13. Links de Kinks – Peter J. Muller
14. Provo-meisjes (excerpt) – Jasperina de Jong and Maria Lindes
15. Attentie (excerpt)
16. Happening (Robert Jasper Grootveld)
17. Litany for the 14th of June, 1966 (excerpt) – Willem Breuker / Orkest 66
18. Attentie (excerpt)
19. My White Bicycle – Tomorrow
20. Provo in Frascati, 1966
21. The Aleph (excerpt) – Peter Schat
22. Happening (Robert Jasper Grootveld)
23. Liquidation of the Provo Organisation, 1967
24. Zo is het toevallig ook nog eens een keer – Selfkick & a choir of Provos

Side B: Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt, etc. (1967–1976)

25. Report from the occupied Maagdenhuis, 1969
26. Dat gebeurt in Vietnam – De Volharding
27. C.Q. – The Outsiders
28. Radio Mokum station call
29. De Trein van A naar Z (excerpt) – Steef Davidson & OAAO
30. Radio Sirene / Gerard van den Berg, 1971
31. De Trein van A naar Z – Steef Davidson & OAAO
32. Radio Mokum, 1975
33. S.O.S. (excerpt) – Het
34. Radio Mokum, 1974
35. Lied van de Macht van het Volk – De Volharding
36. Radio Mokum, 1975
36. De Afbraak (excerpt) – Muziekgroep de Ereprijs
37. Radio Sirene / Gerard van den Berg
38. De Afbraak (edit) – Muziekgroep de Ereprijs
39. Radio Mokum, 1975
40. Solidariteitslied – De Volharding
41. S.O.S. (excerpt) – Het

We start off with a fragment of Peter Schat's 'On Escalation' (tracks 01 and 07). Schat (1935 – 2003) was a renowned Dutch modern composer. He was also a tireless supporter of Provo. In fact, for much of 1966, the headquarters and printing press of Provo were housed in Schat's basement.

Featured (as **tracks 05 & 21**) are also excerpts from Peter Schat's 'Labyrint', composed for the Holland Festival and premiered at Carré on June 23, 1966 (accompanied by riots and smoke-bombs). In his liner notes to 'Labyrint' (titled 'The End of Savagery'), Peter Schat mentions the strong ties between Provo and 'Labyrint'. Similarly, in his novel 'Bericht aan de Rattenkoning', Dutch writer Harry Mulisch describes 'Labyrint' as an "anarchistic Gesamtkunstwerk of music, theatre, film, dance, acrobatics and Dada, a clear extension of the labyrinth of Amsterdam". In fact, Mulisch's description of 'Labyrint' can be seen as a definition of Provo as well (especially when one takes into consideration Provo's strong psycho-geographical ties to the city of Amsterdam, its emphasis on happenings, and its Dadaist influences).

Another modern composer (and jazz musician, and free improviser) inspired by Provo was Willem Breuker (1944–2010), band leader of the famous Willem Breuker Kollektief. What we play now is a fragment of 'Litany for the 14th of June 1966' (**tracks 03, 09 and 17**), a piece from Breuker's debut album 'Contemporary Jazz for Holland' (1966) together with Orkest 66. The title of the piece specifically refers to the riots of 1966, when construction workers attacked the building of De Telegraaf, a Dutch right-wing populist newspaper, after De Telegraaf falsely blamed protesting construction workers for the death of one of the workers. Although the Provos were just one of the groups involved in these riots, it remains an important date within Provo history. On a more personal note: as marching band, the Willem Breuker Kollektief played during the funeral procession of Rob Stolk, in 2001.

Provo introduces itself in a fragment from 'Attentie' (**tracks 04 and 18**), a television program broadcasted by NCRV (August 17, 1965). This particular TV show featured an item in which a group of five Provos are interviewed (Rob Stolk, Garrit Kroeze, Hans Korteweg, Janhuib Blans and Maarten Visser), filmed in front of the statue of Domela Nieuwenhuis (on the Nassauplein). Elsewhere in the mix, we hear fragments (**tracks 02 and 06**) of a radio program reporting about the Provo riots during the wedding procession of Princess Beatrix and Prince Claus, on March 10, 1966. In 'Imaazje! De Verbeelding van Provo' (Uitgeverij Wereldbibliotheek, 2003), researcher Niek Pas extensively describes the way in which these riots have been covered by TV, radio and newspapers.

An important part of Provo were obviously the 'happenings' of Robert Jasper Grootveld (1932–2009), public performances that took place every Saturday night around Het Lieverdje, the statue on the Spui square in Amsterdam. **Track 16** captures one of these happenings.

At a certain point, the center of these happenings shifted from 't Spui to Frascati, a theatre at the Nes, a street near the Dam square. These events took place at the usual Saturday nights, in the months of September and October in 1966. As Niek Pas describes in 'Imaazje!', these performances were well-attended, resulting in riotous back-and-forth processions between the Nes and the Dam. What you hear here (**tracks 08 and 20**) are short snippets of tape, documenting these Frascati happenings. The full cassette can be found in the archive of the International Institute of Social History (IISG).

On **track 14**, we hear Lurelei, a Dutch cabaret group, doing 'Provo Meisjes' ('Provo Girls'), a song that appeared as a 7" single in 1966. The vocals are by Jasperina de Jong and Maria Lindes (the Provo theme was continued on the flipside, with a song called 'Happening Hein' performed by John Lanting). The Provo movement being a real hype in those years, it is only logical that cabaret groups (such as Lurelei) and satirical TV shows (such as 'Zo Is Het Toevallig Ook Nog Eens Een Keer') took full advantage of the Provo phenomenon. Come to think of it, it would be unfair to classify these songs and sketches automatically as exploitation (or 'Provoexploitation'). The fact is, a lot of these chansonniers and cabaretiers were quite sympathetic towards the Provo movement, and, each in their own way, did their part in shaking up the Dutch cultural landscape. Case in point is Mies Bouman, around that time a popular Dutch mainstream TV presenter, and regular contributor to 'Zo Is Het Toevallig Ook Nog Eens Een Keer', a satirical TV show broadcasted by the VARA. For her talkshow, called 'Mies-en-Scene', she interviewed Rob Stolk in 1966, resulting in a very interesting conversation. However, thanks to her sympathy towards Provo, as well as for her contributions to 'Zo Is Het Toevallig Ook Nog Eens Een Keer', she received huge amounts of hate mail, and even had to be protected by the police at one point. Later in the mix, we added the opening song of 'Zo Is Het Toevallig Ook Nog Eens Een Keer' (**track 24**), not the official TV tune, but a rare 1966 freakbeat version performed by The Selfkick (not to be

confused with Dutch beat poet Johnny the Selfkicker), accompanied by "a choir of Provos", or at least, that's what the 7" sleeve says.

Staying within beat territory, we jump to **track 19**. Inspired by the Provo movement, London psych/mod band Tomorrow recorded 'My White Bicycle' in 1967; a clear reference to Provo's White Bike Plan. After the drummer of the band received a Provo badge (given to him by the owner of famous London boutique 'Granny Takes a Trip'), the band decides to travel to Amsterdam to study the Provo movement in more detail. After their stay in Amsterdam, they recorded 'My White Bicycle'. (Earlier, in 1966, Tomorrow contributed to the soundtrack of Antonioni's 'Blow-Up', a movie that coincidentally seems to encapsulate one of Provo's main themes: the blowing up of images, in both senses of the word – enlarging and destroying. But this is just a side-note).

Track 24 documents the official end of Provo. On May 13th, 1967, during a tumultuous happening at the Speakers' Corner in the Vondelpark, the movement liquidated itself in an act of 'auto-provocation'. TV footage of this event shows a public meeting in which every speaker seems to say exactly the opposite of what they mean. Arch-enemies (such as mayor Van Hall) are being described as best friends, Van Heutsz is elevated to an actual movement ('Van Heutszism'), and speakers worry openly about Provo mass-unemployment, during a theatre-like performance of irony and wordplay.

After the self-liquidation of Provo in 1967, Rob Stolk became involved in several other fields of activism, most notably the so-called 'Maagdenhuisbezetting' (the students' occupation of the administrative building of the University of Amsterdam, in 1969), Woningburo de Kraker and the Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt (the loose collective of action committees that, between 1967 and 1976, were trying to put a halt to the city council's plans to demolish the Nieuwmarkt in Amsterdam, as well as other areas). Featured in this mix we hear fragments of free (independent, illegal) radio stations (so-called 'pirates'), strongly affiliated with these actions. First, there's Radio De Vrije Maagd, the station broadcasting from the occupied Maagdenhuis. And then there's Radio Sirene (**tracks 30 and 37**) and Radio Mokum (**tracks 28, 32, 34, 36 and 39**), two stations that were strongly linked to the Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt period. (More about these radio stations can be found in the archive of the IISG).

In 1969, Rob Stolk was actually operating a printing press from within the occupied Maagdenhuis building. A well-known poster he designed and printed around that time was the one announcing Radio De Vrije Maagd: "Citizens of Amsterdam! Don't listen to the capitalist-collaborating mainstream radio. Listen to De Vrije Maagd instead!". An image of this poster is included on the back of this pamphlet.

A slight return to Willem Breuker. In 1972, Louis Andriessen (yet another renowned Dutch modern composer) started, together with Willem Breuker and a couple of other musicians (coming from the fields of jazz and modern composition), an ensemble called Orkest De Volharding ('The Endurance'). This collective performed during political rallies, demonstrations, strikes and local actions. Although not linked to Provo in the strict sense, you can certainly feel the spirit of post-Provo here (**tracks 26, 35, 40**). In fact, in the archive of the IISG, De Volharding is described as an 'action committee, affiliated with Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt'.

Another important figure is Steef Davidson (1943–2010), artist, activist and archivist, and close friend to Rob Stolk. He was involved in collectives and committees such as Aktiegroep Nieuwmarkt, De Vrije Zeefdrukker, De Tand des Tijds; he was also a renowned expert on the subject of political posters. In this mix, we included two of his poetry performances (**tracks 29 and 31**).

We also added a couple of Dutch beat songs by The Outsiders and Het (**tracks 27 and 41**). These tunes are included solely to provide some sort of historical backdrop; although Rob liked beat music, as a teenager he was more into modern jazz. As a matter of fact, even before he published 'Barst' ('Crack'), his first anarchist magazine, Rob ran a jazzclub in Zaandam, together with his friend Jaap de Jong, inviting people like Pieter Boersma, Willem Breuker and Johnny van Doorn. And as it happens, one of the founders of Red Light Radio is the son of Jaap de Jong (yes, we're talking about you, Orpheu de Jong). And so, the past and the present come together once again, like radio waves crossing each other in mid-ether.

For more information, see www.experimentaljetset.nl/provo

Paris: with the Artists of La Générale en Manufacture on the Terrace...

The artists of La Générale squatted a grand empty building in Belleville, central Paris some years back, and got popular. With wild parties attended by movie stars, they became hard to ignore. They were given short-term tenure in an abandoned school of ceramics behind the sprawling state (ex-royal) manufactory of porcelain in Sèvres, and began La Générale en Manufacture. All is quiet now, as the artists tiptoe around the listed historical building, making art and music in the light-filled premises. The theater people waited a couple of years, and then were given a building to continue normally. This history – and the theories besides – was laid out in an interview several of the artists gave on their roof terrace in April, 2011. This is a partial transcript...

HOUSE MAGIC: In the U.S. in the 1970s there was a movement of alternative spaces around the country. In New York, the model is set for federal government funding for artists' workshops. During the 1970s they were created around the country, and in the 1980s Ronald Reagan was elected, and the funding is cut. But some of these places become self-sustaining institutions, and a network for artists is established around the country [see Art Spaces Archives Project at as-ap.org].

Now, in the 2000s, there begins to be around the country a network of anarchist infoshops. There are bookstores and cafes and places where many young people with a left point of view are gathering. And many artists are involved in this. The alternative spaces continue, but they are very institutionalized. So that's the setup in New York [and the urban USA]. Everything rented, everything legal. Sometimes the government gives money and then pulls it back. But I am wondering if somehow — you guys are now in a legal space, but it comes from a movement of squatting. Can you talk about how you decide, okay we're going to be squatting, or there's no options — at the beginning. Especially hearing about the history of the *Rue des Caves* squatting, because Sèvres seems now such a dead town.

ERIK MINKKINEN: That's a really different time of the city itself. Here was a communist city, actually. There was a big car factory [Renault], and all the people working in the car factory were living around here. Then they destroyed the car factory, and tried to install all the media systems and things like that around this area, so it's a different generation. We do have junctions. I studied in the high school in this city, and lived the exact end of that period. And 20 years later we came here, which is a whole different story, with a whole bunch of other squats with different generations.

HM: How did you guys decide that you are going to squat?

VLADIMIR NAJMAN: I don't think that we choose to be in a squat or in an institution. We have just chosen something that is useful to us. The idea is more to try something and then to try to name it, instead of beginning with choosing something which has already a name. Of course we are not naïve. We know that the squat movement, even if it is not organized, does exist. And I don't think we can really be apart from that. But it is so diverse that everyone can find a place in that movement. In France, but also in Germany and in Denmark, you have social squats. We are not so different

from them. Or political squats. That we are for sure. But if we have a political struggle or idea to put in front of everybody, I don't think it's as important as the struggle that a foreigner without legal documents in France could have. This is to say that you can find in Paris very important squats, and we are certainly less important.* But we can [act] without always thinking what is the political or the social meaning, and maybe we are then stronger. It's a kind of a paradox. We are stronger because we feel more free. Are we really free? I don't know.

We have in France the great chance to have very weak institutions. And that is very useful to us. When you have weak institutions, we may be working more for these institutions than they are really working for themselves. I think we are them simply because they are not sustainable like we are. Institutions like the FIAC art fair, I don't say that they are bad or good, but they cannot take any risk. They are sclerotic.

ERIC LOMBARD: They are far from reality, from the ground.

VN: They contribute to a reality which is weak as well. I don't think it's very interesting to see how much we are, or you are

working from inside institutions, from outside, with them, against them, and so on. Simply because they have their own discourses, and this discourse is not an open one. It's very closed, and made for themselves rather than the ordinary people that we are....

The most sensitive issue in politics today is the empty spaces. I don't mean only the buildings, but the empty spaces of political thinking, of political actions. That's why I said we cannot oppose an activism such as ours is and institutions simply because ideally the space where we work is empty. It's some kind of investment into empty spaces which are not only empty by chance. And I do think that one of the most difficult political issues today is the border of the political question, and the way let's say some political institution and including some alternative movement do agree to put a border between politics and something else at some point. So that's interesting, not to cross the border but just to be on the other side of the border, to try to see what's going on there. I do think that the artistic movement of those who recognize themselves in [social] movements is much more interesting than the pure political activism, even the very intelligent one. [To have] an interesting politics, we have to open it.

* Vladimir is referring to groups like Jeudi Noir, which staged a spectacular squat opposite the president's house two years ago on behalf of the homeless. See jeudi-noir.org.

BÉATRICE RETTIG: We went yesterday to Radio Libertaire and passed Rue de Rivoli 59, and walked by [the old] La Générale. Maybe there is someone who can say a little bit about from there to here? The walk from Belleville to here?

HM: That was my first question, to ask how you decide to squat and why, because it's so different from the U.S. decision – they never come close to this kind of idea. Okay, you have a tradition. Second, how you form your group that's going to do this action, and how it develops, because always the beginning when you have adrenalin, you are crashing this thing and it's growing really fast like an inflatable – tell us that story.

EM: Well, Belleville was kind of like a snowball you put on top of a mountain, and before La Générale Belleville, there was a bunch of smaller squats and a bunch of different people. We all come from different areas. Eric [Lombard] comes from La Zoméée, and we all had some spaces, some experience with squats, and I guess La Générale was one of the biggest ones. Everybody glued up all together and stayed quite a bit. Vladimir was part of the team that opened it. Everybody wound up being there at the end, having a space to work in, or maybe not having it because somebody else took the space. It was quite chaotic organization. Whoever left for two weeks would probably not see their space again. It was a city in itself.

JEROME GUIGUE: For many of us La Générale in Belleville was really the first involvement in squatting.

VLADIMIR: Again, the idea was to hide the fact that it was a squat. To hide it as a good surprise after a visit. I'm not sure that we would have a group of good friends such as this one if it was clear that it was a squat, and we gonna defend the squat, political point of view and so on. It was important for the artists that accepted to participate in La Générale in Belleville and here, but it was important for people just going there to have a cup of tea, to see a painting, to see something. We had three schools around at less than 100 meters. So to have the kids, also the parents, it was important not to use the term "squat" as a political term. "Squat" is a denomination from outside. It is nothing more than not-legal occupation of empty spaces, that's it. And it's not so terrible. The housing question in Paris is very difficult. But it can be more difficult to find a place that is nice for you for working than for living. We wanted a place to work. Now the other point is – to come back to what Erik said – there's not one or two or three or four which have opened the space and will have some legitimation –

EM: Part of the team.

VN: It's not to critique, but to be precise. I think it's very important not to be in a history point of view, but to be in a process where you are driven by some point somewhere in the future instead of always coming back to the roots of the beginning, who was the grandfather, and so on.

Concerning the question how do we move from Belleville La Générale in the center city to some kind of rich bourgeois neighborhood. How do we move from an illegal space to some kind of legalization — well, the history is important. La Générale in Belleville became a very trendy place, with famous people coming

there from TV and radio. Erik didn't watch TV, nor myself, and we did not even recognize them. But at some point we had to decide either we stay there and accept the fact that we are a trendy place or we move, we close that. We say, "Okay, we had three very nice years," and it's pretty rare in a life. The second part is that we had elections in France, and the squat issue was very politicized. It was important to close Belleville before it could be used politically. It's not a question of autonomy or independence, it's simply that it's not very nice to be used by a politician, and there were some who tried. Third, is that after a moment you have a lot of individual interests about keeping things as they are, and this is the beginning of the end. I mean some kind of museum of alternative way of thinking, acting, living and so on. That should not be. These three factors were very important in our decision not to move but to finish. When we said we're going to close it, the Ministry of Culture came and offered us something really nice. The agreement was simple: They said "yes" to everything that we wanted, let's say 80% of what we asked. So at this point we decided we take what is offered to us and we keep what we have. Meaning that the people that wanted to stay in a trendy place, try something that might become some kind of alternative institution, they could stay there, but it will be their project, their thing, and those who want to move on this agreement can move. So each one decided either to stay or to move. And some people, quite a lot, decided not to stay and not to move.

HM: So there is now still La Générale in Paris?

EM: The city offered a smaller space, mainly all the people who were doing theater and things like that, which today is the Générale Nord-Est.

VN: They had to stop their activities for two years before they get the new space. And for me it was not an option. If I really needed a new place I would try to open a new space somewhere not legally. I won't wait for two years.

HM: But they did.

VN: That's it. And it was not sure. But even if it was sure, two years, it's a lot of time, you need to do all this bureaucratic work.

JG: And the space they got was much smaller, and they had many internal fights over who would remain in the end. It's a cruel story. Because there were many, and finally there are few staying now.

EM: At the same time people went through a whole bunch of other places, and a bunch of people moved around. I see people from La Générale in all the other squats as well. The people who wanted to stay inside Paris.

HM: I visited two squats yesterday, but it seemed that they had not much real intention to do anything. But when you describe these other squats that the people are moving around in, and the one that you started Eric, La Zoméée, they really had intention – cultural intention? Political intention?

EM: You say it right.

HM: Can you expand a little bit on the difference in the squatting movement in Paris at this moment when you say people are moving around during this waiting period or transition period –

BR: I think there is something really singular in La Générale in the city, to produce its own temporality, and it's made by the fact that there's a general assembly or communication – *du proche en proche* – can you say that in English? I am talking to the next dinner and so forth.

[confused voices]

BR: Which makes the general assembly not coercive to anybody. And this is quite different from what was invented in the preceding generation of squats which were factories becoming controlled institutions, and also quite different in general from the political squats where the assembly is coercive –

HM: Coercive?

EM: A question of having general meetings.

BR: There's no collective decision for any other.

VN: It's more shared decision than collective one.

HM: That's a very interesting distinction.

VN: When sometimes people want to have some kind of collective decision they don't have a collective responsibility for this decision. But in a shared decision one will take a personal responsibility on what he decides. We had here and there some good specialists of what are rules, norms, conventions, in terms of philosophy, so we had some results from academic work on how we can build something which can respect individuals, but also to share something together which will be constructive. We had general meetings in Belleville, and one move was to try to destroy this collective sense or mechanic of irresponsibility, where nobody's responsible so we will vote for something simply because I don't really care. When you begin from that, it's not a historical beginning, it's an everyday beginning. It's an experiment.

BR: Also you can perfectly see in staying here how decentralized is the functioning, and how the space is distributed, the space and the subjectivities, because we did not say okay, let's have as working space exactly the same quantity of square meters, so there's a quality – it's not like this, but it's more situations are producing relationships in spaces. And [currently] projects are emerging within those relationships.

VN: Yes, and linked to that is the fact that you don't have really exhibition spaces. And maybe the best exhibitions that took place here can be everywhere. It's just a question of convention as well, where you decide the exhibition is. I think it's just the person who visits us who decides where the exhibition is. We don't have any pattern of exhibition.”

HM: Well, for me this is the exhibition.

** Nevertheless, La Générale hosts regular normative self-organized exhibitions of younger artists' work

VN: Exactly. It is also important in a political point of view to say that art is opening the doors of politics. It's not from me, it's from the philosopher, Rancière, but it's more a result, a process how we came to that. Art is opening the doors and the languages of our politics. You just have to see that, to recognize it.

HM: Of course, I have to ask, since Guattari worked with the Rue des Caves squats, was Rancière one of the famous who came to La Générale in Belleville?

VN: You cannot give your brain or reflection to someone who will come as a priest to tell you what you have to think. Each one has to think if he wants. If Rancière wants to come, we would invite him to spend the night with us and it will be a great moment. But when we say this kind of icon you say in English? They are not very efficient in a space where you just ask people to live, and not necessarily to come with something to deliver to you, be it thinking, or painting or so on.

HM: In Berlin there has been a specific investment in collective work, in collective living. It seems very formalized, and was the reason for squats in the '70s to create collective work spaces at places like Regenbogen Fabrik. How do you relate to these questions of collective work and collective living?

EM: This is very individualist working space. We really don't work collectively. But living collectively we do. And that's really the point, I think. Trying – we don't really have the criticism of everybody's work here, and we don't really want to, actually. We just respect what the other person is doing, even if we don't respect the work – it doesn't really matter. It makes the space a lot more liveable.

HM: The only project I've really seen as a clear and open art project is the Biennale de Paris. Alexander is standing by the door, and it says “Biennale de Paris,” and talking about his project immediately is very anomalous here. Everyone else, in talking about their creative production is sort of ghostly. They're here, but what are they doing?

EM: Maybe you didn't cross other people's doors. And everybody doesn't open the door here, either, to show what they're doing.

HM: No open studio here.

BR: It's strange we have to justify our heterogeneity. It's like homogeneity would be the default situation.

VN: But in your question there is something important. There is the idea that you have a project, and you will realize your project. We have more the reverse way of acting. We do something, we are confident, and then we see what underlying project which was not even written, people didn't think about that – what was realized, and then we can write the project after. So it's not really a project, but a report on what we were doing which is our project.

HM: The commune movement of the 1960s, the monastery, the convent has rules for living, which makes it possible for very diverse people to live together without a problem. Similarly, I think in the U.S. for collective work, because of the enforced ideology and



A performance at La Générale streamed live on June the 21th

mythos of the individual, the question of collective work always has to be approached, “How do we do it?” Only in music, perhaps, it’s clear. Or productively not clear. In other creative spheres, it’s not clear. So people want rules.

EM: But we have not much rules here at all.

HM: But you have a very evolved practice.

EM: I think we help each other. Helping each other’s project is part of living together. So you can get help from somebody for something very easily, even if he’s not interested in what you’re doing. It’s just a way of life, in that sense. There’s no rule at all. You maybe won’t find any help here.

JG: That’s not true. We made a rule about commercial work. We can’t use the space to make business, to rent, or to do something commercial, only art. An artist here can make his art and then sell it, but can’t run a business. We have three cases of eviction because of this problem. The principe de gratuite, the principle of not paying –

HM: This is also a part of an anarchist ethos. If you go to a bar in a social center, a cafe, how much is the beer? Well, what you want. Maybe this is to avoid being a business. So the state comes and says we need to close you, or we need to collect the taxes or something.

JG: When we made a lot of concerts in Belleville, it was the principle. People who came can give what they want, or maybe nothing. But we can’t fix a price to get in. We didn’t want to. Because it’s like making the space private. So when the people came and said we want to make a concert, and the people who come have to pay, we always said no, people pay what they want, but they can come here without paying.

BR: I think you could even come here free.

HM: So this is collective living, individual working, mutual support.

Can I ask, it’s also kind of closed, like a bubble. You don’t have really a relation to the community, to the hotel across the street [Novotel, a large business hotel].

JG: We have many collective initiatives with other spaces, institutional space and private.

EM: There’s a few art centers around this area that are not really well known in the sphere of Paris art, because it’s outside of Paris.

VN: The question was slightly different. Our immediate neighborhood we don’t have relationship with them. The idea was let’s try to get out from this neighborhood atmosphere or ideology, because we are living next to you we should be your friend, we should try to work with schools around, and so on. If what we are doing is interesting, then the people next door will come.

EM: Some do, actually.

VN: But we don’t have to do any specific work with them. In addition to the work you do to try to have some interesting proposition, invention, and so on. But let’s try to get out from this neighborhood nationalism.

HM: Localism.

EM: The placement of this building is good for that, because the whole [national ceramic] factory behind here is a bubble in the city. Nobody knows what’s going on. And this is considered as that place for the people in the city.



Berlin free store, evicted 2010. Slogan: "We all stay."

BR: Because it's a national structure. So it doesn't have so much relationship with the city.

EM: And we have a highway right in front, so people don't cross the street.

HM: You said the Ministry of Culture offered you this place. This is similar to what happened to Madrid. In the barrio of Lavapiés there was a group making multiple occupations, as Laboratorios. They made three occupations, they were evicted. Then I understand the state Ministry of Culture offered them a piece of the former state tobacco factory, Tabacalera. So they are now in there, this same group, much augmented, managing a self-organized social center not in occupation. So my question is about what seems to be a policy of "flexible governance," an accommodation by both the Spanish and French ministries of culture of activists who undertake squatting actions. Do you have any idea how this happens?

EM: What I suspect is that the idea is just reducing cultural spending. A place like this is, if you just give them an empty building, it's a very cheap cultural tool.

HM: Impoverished ministries of culture allying with impoverished cultural producers.

VN: I don't know, I was not in their head – but it was difficult for them not to support us because of the terrorist way of acting that we had. Saying that we don't really need you. If you want to offer us something, okay. We will accept the gift. But if you don't, okay. We will manage that very well, maybe even better than if you offer us a space. In Belleville we targeted the international press instead of the French. We knew that if you go through a London magazine, an art magazine, you will have more result. We had also in

Artforum, in several Japanese and international blogs, and so on. So at some point it was interesting for them to try something with us. Maybe it was cheaper. I am not so sure that we were so cheap. But even if we were, it's not something that you can reproduce in different places in France, or a concept that you can use to make some economies.

HM: Well, that's the question. Does it make sense to try to normalize this type of work? To encourage occupations and self-organization as, for example, a part of Richard Florida's creative city development consultancy?

BR: Just [about this creative city evolution] has meant a discourse that says that artists are, artists' spaces and projects like La Générale are gentrifying the city, but it has to be criticized. Because when you really study the zones of the city in process of gentrification, the real estate market is much more important than the presence of artists.

EM: Where we are here, it's the opposite of gentrification. This area was gentrified a long time ago.

HM: This is like creative social housing.

J: The point is as well that the Manufacture [the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, royal makers of porcelain] did for a long time want to reappropriate this place, and they thought yes, it's a good thing that artists come here to work because it makes publicity. So that's the kind of social use.

HM: It's a bureaucratic use.

J: It's not for gentrification, but for communication.

VN: In Switzerland when they need buildings to work in they target the rich neighborhood where you have a lot of empty spaces, as much as in poor neighborhoods.

But coming back to your question – it's difficult to organize self-organization. It is important to tell people that you are responsible for your reality. You cannot always say, well, taxes are too much, the state is not doing what it has to do. You are responsible for that, so you cannot complain all the time that you cannot find a place to work and so on. And then you will [move to self-organization], because you just say to people you can organize yourself or not to do what you like to do or not. It's pretty simple.

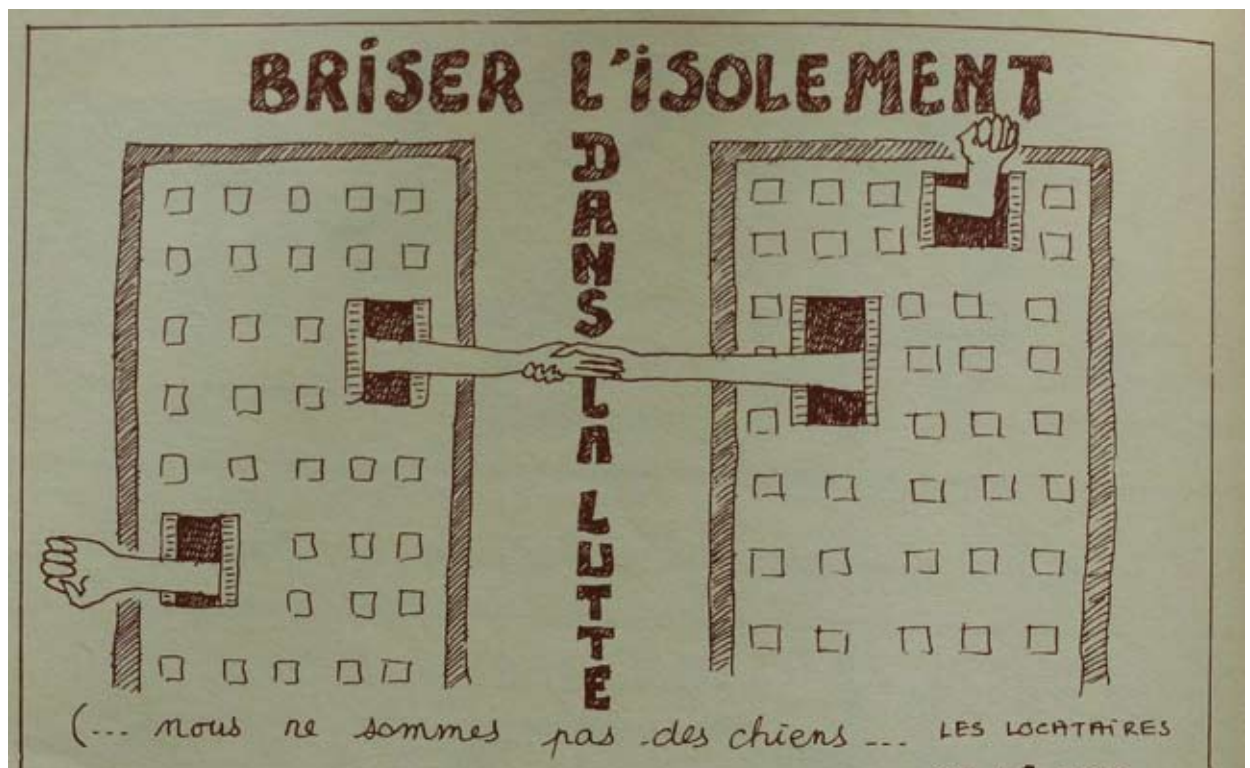
I don't know if someone has to build a network of all these social artistic political places. In some way they are connected through works and in another way than in an institutional point of view.

HM: Well, if you think that the neoliberal hypercapitalist society is coming apart, like a piece of tile coming off of a wall, it's opening many bubbles in the adhesion, so at the least it's important to identify the biggest bubbles where you can go in. Like you're saying, Squat the rich neighborhoods rather than the poor, that's a very good idea to escape the problem of being an agent of gentrification. So at the least maybe an information project doesn't make a network, doesn't make a big world's fair exposition of squatted spaces, but finally spreads some more knowledge about these opportunities – what Hans Pruijt calls the "opportunity structure" of squatting. ...

Sèvres: Legends of the Rue des Caves...

Luc Blanchard's story of the Rue des Caves, a squatted street in the suburban town of Sèvres, is at luc.blanchard.free.fr/

The photos on the next page are from that website. The illustrations here are from squatters' journals reprinted in *Recherches*, No. 19, Septembre 1975, under editorial direction of Félix Guattari.





“The fighting was violent, with some even making up small bombs to defend themselves. The community survived this violent period, and exists today in a legalized form.”

Luc Blanchard's website includes a nearly year-by-year chronicle of the occupation of the Rue des Caves. While his poetic French eludes me, it is clear that the squatters were tolerated by the communist government of Sèvres, which leveraged their presence to secure more public housing. Gaullist-connected developers continued to turn Sèvres into a U.S.-style suburb, however, despite the continual agitations of the squatters for a more human-scale environment. In time the Renault factory, whose workers had anchored the Communist government, was closed and destroyed, and the political support the squatters enjoyed dissolved. Sebastian Schifres summarizes the story: The hippie community began in 1965. Some houses were bought, others leased, others squatted, and by 1968 the community numbered several hundred people. In 1971, some decided to practice a kind of communism, abolishing private property and pooling all assets among themselves,

including clothing which was stored in a common dressing room. These people also threw away their keys and left their doors open. (This episode is well told in a passage from the film *L'An 01* by Jacques Doillon, 1973). This lasted until 1974 when relations with the outside deteriorated. Bands of thugs came into the street, selling drugs, fighting, raping, and settling scores between drug dealers with gunplay. The people were forced to restore private property and close their houses. The gangs continued to terrorize the neighborhood, and police refused to intervene so as to encourage squatters to leave their homes. To defend themselves, the people organized a self-defense militia and equipped each house with an alarm system which triggered a siren. The fighting was violent, with some even making up small bombs to defend themselves. The community survived this violent period, and exists today in a legalized form.



Ljubljana: Metelkova Mesto

Metelkova is an internationally-renowned alternative culture community in the centre of Slovenia's capital, that often draws comparisons to Copenhagen's Kristiania. A self-declared 'Autonomous Culture Zone,' Metelkova Mesto occupies the former 'Fourth of July' military barracks originally commissioned by the Austro-Hungarian army back in 1882 and completed in 1911. The space consists of seven buildings and 12,500m² - making it a sort of city within a city - comprising a former prison (now Celica Hostel), several clubs, live music spaces, art galleries and artist studios. Dedicated to organising social and cultural activities for the public, Metelkova has a nonstop events schedule and is arguably the best after-dark destination in Ljubljana for those looking to experience something wholly unique and unpredictable.

Since it was first created in 1993, Metelkova has consistently been the object of political jockeying, with the long-term status and survival of the community uncertain. Constantly threatened by the lure of commercial development, neo-conservative politicians and internal problems within the 'autonomous zone,' Metelkova has endured simply through the creativity, imagination, energy and determination of the many individuals who have

fought to maintain the autonomy and diversity of community, often through physical, yet non-violent, resistance. The community's greatest defense has been the tireless virtue of the events, festivals, and clubs it organises. For years Metelkova hosted the only Women's Centre in Slovenia and is still today the only place in the country with community-run clubs for disabled people, gays and lesbians. Numerous campaigns against racism, domestic and institutional abuse have been organised and operated out of Metelkova. Ljubljana's only gay (Klub Tiffany) and lesbian (Klub Monokel) clubs are in Metelkova, which is also one of the few places in Slovenia to offer ethnic, sexual and other minorities the chance to socialise openly in a community. Many artists have their studios in Metelkova and the space's clubs play host to all range of music from hardcore to jazz to dub to techno. Celica Hostel is one of the most unique and consistently well-ranked hostels in Europe, and Metelkova's Alkatraz Gallery has one of the most diverse and creative contemporary art collections in former Yugoslavia.

— from "Drop a Squat: The Story of Metelkova Mesto" in *ljubljana-life.com* 2/2010 // Metelkova's official website is at metelkova.org

TAZ: Temporary Autonomous Zone – The Spirit of Metelkova...

The first time I stood in Metelkova on a Friday night I thought that here, if anywhere, is an autonomous zone. There were four different bands playing in the surrounding clubs and hundreds of people were drinking, smoking, and generally having fun. Metelkova is not meant to appeal to the mainstream. It is a place free of the influences of the state and hegemonic culture; yet when you look, you see more than just a giant party. It is an institutionalized setting. Without the institutional setting it would have died out years ago.

The idea of a TAZ (temporary autonomous zone) is explored in an article written by Hakim Bey. He describes zones of "space, time, or imagination" that can be liberated to create a free culture. They disappear as soon as they are named or identified, only to spring up somewhere else. It is cultural resistance without engaging the state, and it continues only as long as possible suppressors don't know it exists or have no way of understanding the form of resistance. Metelkova cannot be said to be part of this framework. It is named, it is defined, and it is an institution that has experienced attack after attack from the mainstream media and from the municipality of Ljubljana. It is not a specter that the state fails to see. The situation that created the space, the original squatting, was a manifestation of this TAZ phenomenon. The place was squatted and it was liberated, but the intention was to make something permanent. It is a sizable plot of valuable land technically owned by the city. This kind of uninstitutionalized space could not continue on a permanent basis, especially in the face of the concerted attempts by the media to portray the place as a haven

for junkies and drug dealers. The stated purpose of Metelkova is to create space for alternative culture and art, but at the same time it also protects the space liberated by the TAZ uprising from threats to destroy it. In this way, the institution that is Metelkova today is the footprint of a TAZ. But that isn't all that there is to say about Metelkova and the concept of TAZ.

While Metelkova itself is permanent and constantly needs to directly resist the state through negotiation, there is still an element of the TAZ in its appeal. One of the original squatters who worked as Metelkova's PR agent in the early years, Miha Zadnikar, reminisced about a time that Manu Chao, the famous musical artist, came to Ljubljana. According to Miha, Manu Chao's manager refused to set up and play in Metelkova, preferring one of the more mainstream venues. Later that night, Manu Chao showed up at Metelkova with his guitar and played in front of the open kitchen for himself and two hundred others. It was not planned by Metelkova's organizers. It simply happened. Something similar happens every Friday night when several hundred people gather almost by coincidence in Metelkova. Bands play in the venues on the edges of the complex and the clubs play more mainstream music in order to attract crowds and sell beer. In the middle is a vast crowd of people smoking, drinking, playing music out of their car stereos or strumming on their own guitars, all talking and mixing. The actual physical space is perfect for this. All the buildings face in towards large open spaces; people form crowds outside the clubs and mix. Sometimes a small group will kick a bottle between them or throw a Frisbee around while standing among the crowd,



Striking students during an occupation at University of California, Berkeley, 2009

somehow managing to not hit anyone who isn't playing despite the number of people in the area.

This is the TAZ. There are between 80 and 100 organized events in Metelkova in any given month, but it is the party that most people come for. I have asked some 50 people "Why do you come here?" and every single one has mentioned the party. But this space isn't simply a place to socialize. Miha said that the city government doesn't understand Metelkova and focuses on the legalization of the institutions and overlooks what is really important. When I asked what that was, he said "many small things" and gave me an example that struck me as odd: "Silence." During the day, Metelkova can be a tranquil

place, which is another function of the spatial freedom. Metelkova is a group of clubs and artist's studios that share a space and try to promote alternative media and culture. But almost more importantly, it defends a space that is culturally liberated and open to all. The TAZ within Metelkova is its spirit.

Punk Roots: The Transformation of City Space

The task of squatting Metelkova in the early 90s was no small feat. It took months of struggling with the City of Ljubljana and the Government Republic of Slovenia before the two declared the former military barracks as space usable by the Network for Metelkova. The original founders of the cultural space utilized their knowledge of Slovenian laws as well as excellent organizational techniques efficiently and successfully. Despite the many changes that have occurred over the past 15 years, many participants believe Metelkova has retained the original punk mentality in its operations, valuing aesthetics and politics that challenge mainstream conventions. The punk community has historically been associated with squatting and has undoubtedly influenced the plan of action for the space. The Do-It-Yourself ethos pervades its volunteer-run cultural spaces, artist residences, and political activism. Yet other users of the space are unconcerned about this ethos and believe it has declined in recent years.

Many of the teenagers who frequent Metelkova on the weekends have said that they do so because of its location, lax alcohol policy and semi-closed quarters; it gets them off the street and gives them a place to be on weekends. Metelkova is a safe haven where they are less likely to get approached and questioned by police officers. Several teenagers have commented that they have met numerous intimate friends there and have virtually no other place to go. Coincidentally, there seems to be a link between coming to

Metelkova simply to socialize and a lack of historical knowledge about the space itself.

Young adults who are more connected with the punk scene in Slovenia expressed some discontent with how Metelkova has changed within just the past five years. In their opinion, Metelkova is now overrun with 14 and 15-year-olds who attend simply to drink heavily and talk with friends; they remain clueless about the struggles that the Network for Metelkova has had to go through in order to secure the space. Other self-proclaimed punks lamented the current state of Metelkova due to its alleged severance with punk aesthetics.

Older persons involved with Metelkova focus on the positive effects that the center has but were also open about issues that it faces. According to Natasa, an original squatter, there were over 80 events happening at Metelkova each month in the late 1990s, of varying origin. She argues that "music was always the main culture" in the beginning and Metelkova has since then expanded to include "other social groups" who want to utilize the space. She believes this is why more outsiders are now involved and Metelkova is not so empty in the daytime.

Original participants grew up in the Tito and post-Tito eras, when Yugoslavia trumpeted its system of worker self-management and mix of socialist, communist, and social democratic economics. Although worker self-management lost energy and was abandoned when Slovenia became independent, the ideas of collective decision-making and shared public resources remain hallmarks of Metelkova's practice in some areas.

Graffiti: A Vital Form of Community Expression

The graffiti present in Metelkova is not only a strong aesthetic characteristic, but also ingrained in its cultural background. The purveyors of visual art in the space have utilized the previously bleak and crumbling walls of the former "Fourth of July" military barracks to reflect the communal ideals of artistic expression and appreciation in the space provided. The walls of Metelkova have changed innumerable times over the last 15 years; even though the content may be different, the spirit is still present today.

Metelkova has faced continual criticism through the years. Many inhabitants in Ljubljana believe that the street art in Metelkova has influenced lowbrow and amateur artists to add their graffiti to commercial buildings and other non-approved spaces throughout the city. According to Natasa, an original founder, some of Metelkova's neighbors recently wrote to the mayor of Ljubljana to

complain that the cultural center encourages graffiti artists to tag their houses.

If Metelkova's visual art does inspire unprofessional artists to create works in Ljubljana, the issue at hand may be that they feel they are below the level of doing their work in an artistic space like Metelkova. This may inspire them to try minimal pieces throughout the city in order to improve their skills or increase recognition. Anrea, an artist-in-residence from London, believes this is a possible explanation. It may also be plausible that street artists intend to create intricate designs but are deterred by the possibility of facing legal charges if caught. According to a local DIY artist, the consequence for creating graffiti in the city is a fine around 2,000 Euro.

Apparently there is an informal code of conduct when creating art within Metelkova as well. Anrea commented that artists have an 'anything goes' policy that gives them the freedom to do designs as they wish. Despite this freedom, they are still bound by a common respect for others' art. He recently painted a beautiful black and white rat on the front of the Metelkova 6 building and noted that he only utilized space that did not have much going on. Each artist at Metelkova uses his or her own personal judgment when choosing both the piece to create and the space to decorate. This freedom of artistic expression and creation is truly enviable and independent artists may be attempting to emulate this sovereignty. "Like any other real city, Metelkova also embraces public spaces intended for association, amusement, flow of information and inspiration. Although sometimes the opinion prevails that Metelkova is one single artists studio, the place actually offers a whole bunch of other adventures. Namely, if Metelkova did not have any open public space, the majority of us would not have anything to do there, would we? Who would like to hang around in a studio? Needless to say that studios would not perform their function either."

— Tom d'Elf//from a very extensive website on Metelkova produced by a group from Goucher College (n.d.)



"Flyer insect" jpeg with caption, "Are you also an opportunist?" Schijnheilig occupationgroup, Amsterdam.

"The significance of Metelkova lies in its very organic structure, the way how it exists and acts. Everything that in the world of applicable logic and hermetic hierarchy appears to be chaotic, meaningless and waste-like can, in places like Metelkova, constitute itself as a mirror image of our complex civilization consciousness. Our consciousness is not only made of what we want and like...it is also made of what we do not like and are afraid of....

"Metelkova lives in ourselves, in each individual, this is why we try to preserve it through artistic activities. Each work of art, including things like a grill processed as a mosaic, adds to the comprehension of this idea. It is here that I am faced with another kind of beauty, which is far from the established artistic comfort and, hence, much more direct."

— Aleksij Kobal



Postcard of a "hof" in Berlin by Christian Hetey.

U.S.A. Stories

Bronx, New York: The End of Hostos-Crimmins Garden

"Almost every block has a vacant lot or a pile of rubble where a building burnt down," Leroy Walker wrote in a article titled "A Little Piece of Puerto Rico with a View of the South Bronx." "Buildings go up in one lifetime, burn down in the next, and others are built in their place. The Bronx is a giant toxic machine, constantly rebuilding itself with no consideration for the comfort or health of the people who live there.

"Look a little closer though, and you will little bits of green in the sea of concrete and brick, little bits of healthy community rising from the ashes of a broke-down ghetto. These are the community gardens, and this is the story of one in particular called the Hostos-Crimmins garden.

"In 1988, a group of friends from Puerto Rico cleared out the rubble of a vacant lot on Beekman Avenue near 143rd Street and built a garden. In 1995, a developer built on the site and the garden relocated several blocks away to the corner of 141st Street and Crimmins Avenue. In the 80's and 90's, 141st Street was one of the most dangerous places in the entire city. The Black Spades and the Savage Skulls were among the four and sometimes five rival gangs prowled the streets. One man who lived on 141st recalled that you couldn't cross the street without getting into a fight.

"Step through the gates into the garden, and suddenly you enter a different world. A row of Atlantis [sic - likely Ailanthus] trees and very large sunflowers grow along the fence that surrounds the garden and

Hostos Crimmins Garden help to insulate it from the surrounding noise and ugliness.

"As soon as you get inside, your mind and body relax, and you catch a deep breath of tranquility. Rows of healthy peppers, carrots, zucchini, and a dozen other vegetables prove that the Bronx soil is not so toxic as to prevent life. (sorry I can't be grammatically proper and write about this in the past tense, but it is just too sad.) [Ed. Note: parenthesis from original]

November 21, 2002 - Destruction of the garden begins. In pre-dawn hours three people were arrested at gunpoint while defending the Hostos-Crimmins Community Garden in the South Bronx. Police raided the months long encampment of local gardeners and community activists before sunrise to avoid the light of the sun and the media.

Walker's text continues: "Centered on the north edge of the garden is a fairly large shack called a casita, and another smaller casita appears somewhat hidden in the clutter of the garden's eastern reaches. The casitas, as well as everything in the garden have a very makeshift appearance. Their construction reflects the fact that they were made out of whatever materials the gardeners could get a hold of, and built on a bit-by-bit time schedule whenever the gardeners found the time to work on them. They decorated the garden using the same method of spare time, spare materials, and random whimsy to create a beautiful and intricate work of art. A peach tree provides shade for a cement pool of water surrounded by half a dozen statues of the

Virgin Mary and several statues of Jesus. The gardeners were very proud of the fact that ducks often visited their pond. A couple of chickens ran loose, never tempted to leave their green oasis. A picket fence was painted in bright red, blue and yellow, the three colors alternating between each board. Stuffed animals and figurines were attached everywhere, and just when I thought I had noticed them all, another one would appear hanging from the ceiling by a string or hiding in the onion bed. I came to realize that I would never get to know all the details of the garden because it was constantly changing. Against the orderly backdrop of rigid lines and dull gray precision, the green chaos of the garden appeared more beautiful than I can ever express in words. It was like a picture of Earth set against the dead backdrop of outer space, with some junky old stereo playing tapes of beautiful Puerto Rican folk music." Leroy Walker was one of the advocates arrested at the time.

— excerpted from "Community Garden Controversy Reignited," by Jennifer Riveraton at nyc.indymedia.org, April 2010

San Francisco: The Raid at the Rug House

by Michael Steinberg

Pepé saw the cop cars outside first. There were two of them, sitting ominously in front of our home, the Rug House. It was just after dusk on Monday, November 14.

Before we knew it there was shouting in the darkness downstairs. Angry white beams of light slashed through the empty invaded ground floor.

"We're up here," I cried from the top of the stairs. "What's the problem?"

"Come down here!" a belligerent voice boomed from below.

"No, it's O.K., c'mon up here," I answered. "What's going on?"

In an instant all the angry beams were burning into my naked face as the cops stomped up the stairs, led by a straining short-leashed German shepherd.

"Hey, get the light out of my eyes!" I complained blindly. "I can't see!" "Get your hands up!" one of them yelled. "Get the fuck up against the wall, all of you!"





"Tate Modern: Tomorrow Is Another Day (After the Economic Crisis)," installation by Not An Alternative for the Tate Modern, May 2010. The work implicated Tate corporate sponsor, Morgan Stanley, for its role in the economic crisis.

All six of us lined up, our costumes and postures a mockery of all existing orders.

"What are you doing in here?" one of them bellowed.

"We live here," I answered honestly.

"You're trespassers. You're expletive deleted," he sneered. "No. We've got permission from the owner to be here," I asserted. "You can't just kick us out. You have to have a complaint from the owner before you can say we're trespassers. His name is Sean Beamish. He said we could stay here till they take the building down. He's tall with a black beard and black hair." "You're full of expletive deleted," the cop suggested. Meanwhile, the dog's sniffing everything but the kitchen sink, which there ain't.

"It's true," I argued. "By law you've got to contact the owner before you can do anything."

"We got a complaint from a neighbor," the cop countered. "They called 911. You're trespassing in an abandoned building and you've fucking gotta leave."

"But..." I started, spreading my arms in frustration.

"Get your fucking hands up! Can't you fucking hear?" "Look, you want to come down to the station and talk to the sergeant?" another cop asked. "He's smarter than us." I considered that but then recalled the pair of bolt cutters in the bottom of my bag.

"You got jobs?" the other cop snarled. By now the dog has led the rest of their crew away empty handed and headed.

"Yeah, I got a job," I said. "I'm a journalist."

"Huh. Then you got something to write about," the boss cop huffed.

"O.K., get your things together and clear out," the cop ordered.

We rushed around throwing our meager belongings into assorted bags and backpacks. Our brief life here is flashing before me, the delicate detailed wire flowers that Ernest stayed up all night making to sell on Castro Street, the way the sun comes in the front windows and down through the century old skylight every morning, the cold I fought off during my first bitter night here sleeping on an abandoned rug, the mockingbird that sings a never ending always changing song with Orion shining brightly down on it in the backyard's vacant vivid darkness, the dreams I started to remember and the nightmares I began to forget.

But that's all blotted out by authority in bloated blue uniforms hurling insults and taunts at us. Every time I insisted on our right to keep our home here, the cops reminded me of the sergeant and other implied police pleasantries awaiting me at Mission police station, eventualities which definitely were not on my agenda for the evening.

"O.K., we're going to secure the building as best we can," the top cop informed me. "And if we find you in here again, we'll definitely take you in."

We dragged our stuff and our bikes down the stairs and out onto the sidewalk, where 911-prone neighbors were gawking. The

cops came out soon after, said goodnight, and drove off towards coffee and donuts.

We checked the door. The cops had locked it on their way out. But there's always another way into your own home. I ran back in one of those ways to retrieve something of little monetary but enough sentimental value. On my way out I left the door unlocked. We went off into the night, looking for empty buildings that nobody else wants. They're easy to find, just like us.

Homes Not Jails opened up the Rug House, formerly "Hampton Rugs since 1894," at 348 Church Street, near 16th and Church [in San Francisco, California], a few months back. It was big and vacant and had beautiful old wood vaulted ceilings and a toilet that worked. It provided housing and community for over a dozen formerly homeless people who shared what they had and kept the place clean and sober.

By the time you read this, the building may have been demolished. A demolition permit from the city Planning Department allows the building to be taken down anytime after November 24. The replacement, a \$1.7 million project, will be 40 feet high with a garage on the bottom and three stories of 15 condos above – a design well loved by tremors 7 and above on the Richter scale. There are no plans for a mockingbird.

– from *Homes Not Jails* (Black Rain Press, San Francisco, 2002).

Shelter: a Squatumentary

(45 min.; 2008), by Hannah E. Dobbz.

In economically turbulent times, rent and home-ownership have become unaffordable at best and impossible at worst. Thus, people all over the world continue a long tradition of reclaiming this basic human right by squatting. *Shelter: A Squatumentary* is a documentary film that explores the squatting movement in the East Bay from 2004 to 2007. We follow three examples of the struggle for housing in an unaffordable market such as that of the San Francisco Bay Area. Hellarity House, Banana House, and Power Machine are stories of squatters who have found one tentative solution to the ongoing housing crisis.

Q: What is squatting?

A: Squatting is a crouching action low to the ground... but in this context, squatting is the act of reclaiming unused space without the exchange of money. That space can be anything from an empty building to an abandoned lot. Squatting can be used as a tactic to provide shelter, bring attention to housing issues, create community space, or establish a guerrilla garden (or whatever else!).

Q: But isn't that illegal?

A: Classically speaking, yes. Advocates of “property rights” argue that if a person did not pay for it, then they have no right to use it. More practical thinkers, however, argue that property is actually fluid; that is, if a speculator is sitting on a vacant property or if a building has been left derelict by negligent owners, members of the public should have the right to reclaim it to fulfill the needs of the community. Besides, direct action and political pressure have long been used to reshape unjust laws, and squatting is a very direct form of that.

Q: I've heard about squatting in Europe, but I thought it was impossible in the United States.

A: Europe is more notorious for accommodating squatters because most European countries enjoy what is called “open squatting.” [*This is no longer true; but they do it anyway.* – Ed.] In the United States, squatting still very much exists, but the idea of squatted “social centers,” as they are called in Europe, is rare here in the States. Because Americans cannot often be “open” about their squatting efforts, such moves are more likely quiet and clandestine, giving the impression that they don't exist.

Law is malleable, as demonstrated by the changing property laws of the 19th and 20th centuries in response to masses of Americans resisting speculation and unjust land legislation. The law should



recall its own pliability when outmoded legislation comes to work against justice today.

A pivotal example of this trend in selective justice is found in the debris of the economic crisis that began in 2007. The real-estate bubble bust left 15% of housing units empty by the end of 2008, yet homelessness persists. (Two years later, the statistic is virtually unchanged at 14%.) So increasing numbers of Americans are resorting to squatting—the all-but-forgotten American institution of self-help housing—to survive.

Beginning with the colonialist land grab that sentenced natives to centuries of poverty, through the little-known feudalistic era of upstate New York, Western homesteading, the East Coast squatter resurgence in the 1980s, and finally the foreclosure squats of recent years, I argue that we must normalize an effective and sensible modern-day land distribution system. There is no housing crisis, in the sense that there is no shortage of housing; rather, it is a case of perverted distribution.... The question is, “How can we move away from housing as commodity and toward housing as survival right?”

[adapted from Hannah E. Dobbz's website]

Democracy



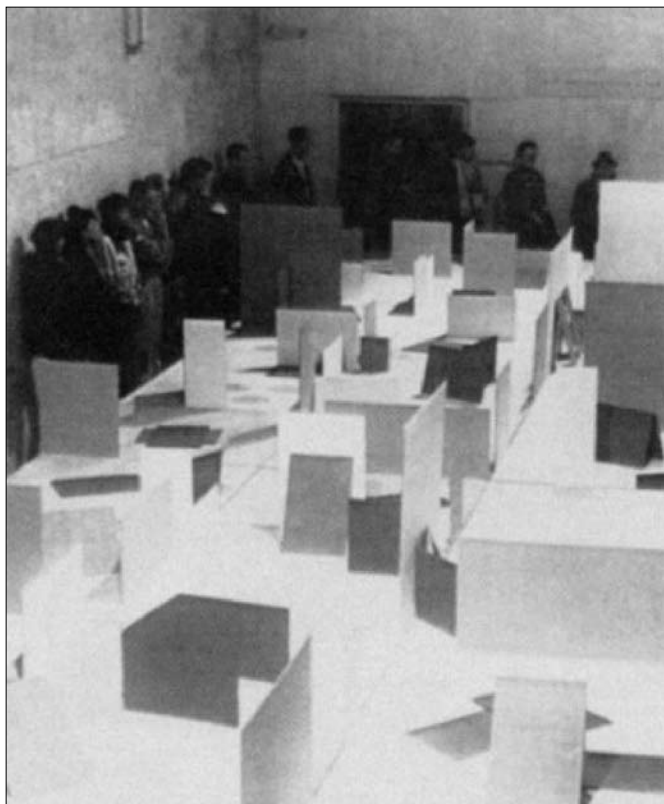
here is *nothing* holding society together. No institutions worthy of sacrifice. There is, on the contrary, amorphous techniques of management that appear on the theater of public life. This is what passes for government. As if the institutions themselves no longer hold power but their image does. There is no family. There is no community. There is no social obligation. Capitalism allowed for each of us to flee these dint institutions. In order to manage the dissolution of the social that capitalism has wrought, there is now a discreet refinement of the image of law and order. Law no longer carries with it anything more than its application; law serves the norm. Everything follows from this subtle fact.

In order to understand this world that feels so foreign and hostile, I have found a few concepts that describe the terror and anxiety enacted upon my body. I want to elaborate these concepts because they are imprisoned by intellectuals and kept distant from me. What is called "Biopower" and "Spectacle" are super-institutional techniques of management, which are deployed at all levels of this imploded society. From something as banal as jay-walking, to the proliferation of snitching, to the murder that somehow confirms the smooth function of law, Biopower and Spectacle are able to extract the barest concept of life from a legal-citizen, and in that same operation relieve it of its "debt to society" again remaking it as "American," "Black," "Sick," "Woman," "Hipster." When someone praises the hard work of police or politicians or sportscasters, they pay a secular indulgence for the blank guilt they have for merely existing. We do this because Empire watches over the world of the living and can and will subtract its naughty citizens when they fail to perform their roles.

I've painted a world at peace that can only be interpreted as *war*. In such confusion, it's comforting to know who or what is the enemy. For me, there are three practices of Biopower and Spectacle that conjoin with each other through the efforts of three known enemies. My enemies are not the pure outside that scares me when I am alone and sick. They are the points of unity that generate the environment of terror that makes up daily life under Empire. My three enemies are: Police, Bosses, Rapists. The environment that they generate is one of policing and snitching, work and exploitation, rape and distance from ourself as bodies, but they also rely on this environment for survival. What is called the State, Capitalism, and Patriarchy would not have been possible without these figures. What is now called Empire can only function with these figures to control us. To me, they are the absolute enemy. They must be exposed, faced, and met with violence.



ART SQUAT NEWS



the "desk" at W139

Amsterdam: W139 history

The former theater at Warmoesstraat 139, on the oldest street of Amsterdam, was squatted in October 1979 by a group of five young artists. Guus van der Werf, Marianne Kronenberg, Martha Crijns, Reinout Weydom, and Ad de Jong had graduated from the Rietveld academy in the spring of that year and had made a summer tour through Europe in a van with their works and a list with addresses and phone numbers of galleries and museums. When they came back, they felt that before they would focus on an international career it was important to have a place to show their works to their friends in their own city. There was also a more general ambition of initiating a counterculture in Amsterdam, a movement against the closed world of commercial art and museums.

The huge, cold and light space formed an oasis in the dense, rundown environment of the city center, a neighborhood that in the early 1980s was dominated by drug dealing and prostitution. In permanent competition with a number of comparable artists-run squats, W139 opened a new exhibition with performances and punk music every weekend. The artists lived and worked in W139 and its opening hours ran from noon till after midnight. After about eight years, the fire of the first group of artists ran out and a dinner and a discussion were organized for about forty artists and designers who were in one way or another connected to W139. From the discussion sprang many ideas about the direction W139 had to take and the question of who wanted to take responsibility

for that. Hans van den Ban, Martin Grooteboer, Jozee Brouwer, and Kitty van Roekel were the answer and would take turns in a rotating three-month directorship. Van den Ban was at that time considered an established artist with an international career, and he saw W139 as a possibility for new ways of presenting art. These shows attracted international attention. In an exchange program with French artists, the future initiators of the Palais de Tokyo visited W139; Van den Ban believes that the Palais de Tokyo's very successful exhibition concept was to a large extent inspired by this visit.

In 1990, Ad de Jong, one of the founding artists, became the first W139 director. He succeeded in finding and attracting the right people for W139 to establish itself as a place for artistic risk and innovation. His idea was always to look for people "who were better artists than himself" and then "not to be in their way." On the other hand he was not afraid to reject proposals by invited artists or to suggest far reaching alterations. He experimented with new physical support structures for artworks, alternative lighting conditions, and combinations of art and interior design. The Desk shows, in which artists were invited to create a one night event with their work on a huge table that filled the entire front space of W139 (except for a one meter corridor along the walls), is an example of the kind of ideas for art presentation that were developed during those years. In another extraordinary show I remember, small, framed etchings and woodcuts were lighted by huge, secondhand color neon signs. Each director has four years to sculpt W139 entirely according to his or her ideas: Theo Tegelaers became director in 1994, then Jean Bernard Koeman in 1998, Ann Demeester in 2002, myself in 2006, and recently Tim Voss, former director of Kunstverein Hamburger Bahnhof in Hamburg was appointed. W139 is a place where artists can realize their own desires and share them for free with everybody who enters the door. Isn't this what everybody wants?

– *Gijs Frieling, former director of W139 // from "Desire and Relevance: Curating for the Many at W139", Manifesta Journal no. 10, 2009/2010 // at: w139.nl/en/article/w139-history/*

London: Party at a disused meat factory, Tottenham Hale on 31 December 1997

Joshua Surtees recalls this party at London Loves: 'The venue, we quickly realised, had once been an abattoir or meat factory. This was evidenced by large machinised meat hooks hanging from the ceiling, huge conveyor belts and various bits of slicing and dicing equipment. The size of the place was almost unimaginable. Each room was the size of a football pitch. Each contained a soundsystem playing either techno, jungle or gabber'.

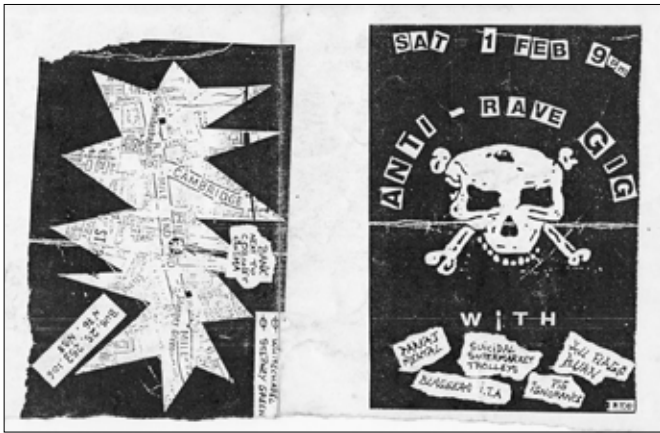
This strange sense of space has always been one of the features of larger squatted buildings. In commercial clubs, every metre is planned for - the bar, the dancefloor, the cloakroom. Squatted buildings can be small and crowded but sometimes, like this one, huge and cavernous with a fantastically uneconomic use of space - whole areas where people can just drift. And yes, as Surtees point out: 'These were buildings lying empty in ruins. Filthy, devoid

of electricity supplies or running water, windows broken, utterly neglected and destined to stay like that for years. Soundsystems such as Crossbones transformed these spaces into living, breathing, mind altering events full of colour, energy and sound. Very, very loud sound.'

— posted by Transpontine, from the blog "History Is Made at Night: The Politics of Dancing and Musicking."

London: Anti Rave Gig 01-02-1992

Held in a squatted bank in Mile End Road, Whitechapel, this was busted quite violently by police. One of several parties/gigs in squatted venues which were busted in typical shows of heavy handed police approach around that time including also: The Hell House squat and another squatted bank in Peckham, (this list is by no means exhaustive) which were all busted over quite a short period of time, maybe a couple of months at the most.



Parkaj Mental, the opening band had just started playing when apparently a couple of P.O turned up outside. They were told they could not come in and apparently some slightly (or was that very?) pissed individuals started roughing them up a bit. At that point they called for help and next thing you know there were cars vans and officers from all over London turning up truncheon drawn out and charging in.

Due to the table that was being used for collecting donations on the door being in the way, we didn't manage to actually close the doors and after about a minute or so of trying to keep them out by holding the door closed the truncheon battering on our hands was too much and the (small comparatively to the actual amount in the place) people trying to keep them out caved in and the police came charging in hitting people left right and centre.

I remember being stuck just in front of the entrance by my rucksack which was wedged somehow in a corner and a copper coming at me truncheon drawn and ready, I was waving my hands in front of me and must have looked suitably scared as luckily for me he veered course and went after someone else.

I remember that while this was going on, the people trying to hold the door closed were some of the organisers and a bunch of regular people while the tough looking supposedly hard north London crusties from the school of bullying were frantically looking for a way out the place of which there wasn't one.

All of this obviously put an end to the proceedings, quite a few people got nicked and there was also a subsequent bit of punk hunting by the police in the surrounding areas for the rest of the

night, at least one person I know of being set upon while walking home later and being beating up then arrested.

For my part I reunited with the 2 friends over from France that were there with me and we stuck around for a bit helping to recover the P.A. equipment (for the man whose name I can't remember now, but which did most of the P.A. work for a lot of the squat gigs around that time. He used to turn up with his P.A. in his black cab if that rings a bell to you and you can shed any light on this) and band equipment and whatever the police would let us get back out of there.

This also spelt the end for the squatted cinema next door where a gig was to be held the following Saturday (of which more later in another post).

— posted by burn bay, be burn at gig-squat-parties.blogspot.com/

Zurich: Temporary urban paradises...

...2.Paradise lost

A short history of temporary cultural zones (TKZ) in the city of Zürich: In 1968, 50 years after the Cabaret Voltaire, student protesters called for a youth centre. After a summer of riots they were given an abandoned bunker in the city centre. This center was run by activists, but failed after a series of drug-related deaths occurred on the premises. After a few months the centre was closed by police. In 1980 the youth riots led to the establishment of the TCZ named Autonomes Jugend Zentrum (AJZ). A number of punk concerts were organised, and the AJZ had a great impact on the local music and art scene. After the eviction of the AJZ in 1981, squatting became increasingly difficult due to the city's policy of zero tolerance towards squatters. In 1990 the situation changed after a Social Democratic municipal government was elected. A number of projects sprang up. Unlike their predecessors these were not open to the public, but were more centred on the social experiment of collective living. Many of these houses were evicted within 12 months, and so the persons within the groups changed from project to project. In 1992 a group of activists squatted the buildings of the former Wohlgroth factory next to Zürich's main station. Due to an abundance of bureaucratic and economic limitations, and because the squat had no political and ideological obligations, the Wohlgroth became a magnet for artists and musicians. The Wohlgroth had three bars, a disco, a concert hall, a vegetarian restaurant, a cafe, a gallery, its own beer, was home to over 100 people, and was open to the public 24 hours a day. After its eviction in 1993, many of the activists resumed their normal lives, and squatting became more introspective. Many houses were occupied in the following years, but all of these projects were, apart from occasional punk concerts and techno parties, private living spaces. The social utopia was reduced to wearing the same clothes, hairstyles and in between sharing a vegan meal in the communal kitchen.

In 2002 a group of activists reopened the derelict historical Cabaret Voltaire in Spiegelgasse 12, Zürich-Niederdorf.* Performances, concerts and cultural activities, and the fact that the protagonists of the cabaret lived within the building made this six week long happening known throughout Europe, and obtained a great deal of media attention. This action came to be known as the first international dada festival, and during the following years it is held annually in and out of Zürich. In Zürich the dadafestival always took place in buildings that were about to be torn down. These temporary cultural zones lasted between 3 weeks and 3



participants in an "inhabited sculpture" by Mark Divo

months, and international and local performers attracted an audience of all ages. In 2005 part of the group around the dadafestival relocated to Prague and organised another two TCZs in this city. The first one was within the second international biennale for contemporary art in the Kinsky Palace by the name of "real biennale," and another project named "proces" took place in an empty furniture store in the Holosovice Triznice. Both projects went for two months and incorporated local Czech and international artists. In 2007 the 5th annual dadafestival was held in Kolin, and was at the same time the inauguration of the d.i.v.o. institute.

3. Paradise found

The history of the TCZ in Zürich show how the political demand for an autonomous youth centre led to riots and in the end the acceptance of squatting as a form of collective lifestyle. In this process the political and ideological ideas became replaced by introspective social experiments, and in the end also made way for groups of artists to organise their own platform, to present their works and works of others. By opening the TCZ to a wider audience, and by allowing them to enjoy art at reasonable prices in a unique environment the issue of the cultural squat has received wide acceptance in Zürich. Over the years the dadafestival has brought international artists, musicians and performers to collaborate together and to create a festival where audience and artists can engage and interact. The fact that the participants of the festival were actually living within the exhibition space made the whole festival into a dense, inhabited social sculpture.

Throughout all festivals and actions the group of participants has grown from a local group of Zürich-based artists to a Europe wide net of cultural activist in all fields of the arts. Because the temporary cultural zone that the dadafestival defined was not attached to any political or ideological dogma, the group organising the festival remained dynamic and managed to continue the project on an annual basis, even without having to focus entirely on one specific building, city or country. This leads to the conclusion that a TCZ like the dadafestival can be launched in any city or country, institution or building. Paradise can be found everywhere, we just have to work for it.

– from Mark Divo's website dadadata.ch/temporary-urban-paradises

*This occupation was the subject of the film "Dada Changed My Life," by Daniel Martinez, Olga Mazurkiewicz, and Lou Lou (29 min. 2003)

Paris: from "A Truly Underground Movement"

by Jon Lackman

Upon a hill in Paris's Latin Quarter sits the monumental Panthéon, a tomb for storied Frenchmen. One evening three Septembers ago, six uninvited visitors unlocked door after door on their way to the vaulted catwalk that rings the interior of the building's central dome, where they crafted a base. They wired the space for electricity and Internet and hauled up a small library, a computer, a dining-room table, a hotplate, a stocked minibar, armchairs and assorted tools. Over the following year, these men and women spent nearly all their free time there disassembling, cleaning and restoring the building's superlative six-foot-tall clock, an 1850 Wagner that hadn't chimed for decades (the building's administrators had

wearied of winding it once a week) and faced an imminent death by rust. The restorers came and went, by day and night, unnoticed. They received mail.

The restoration, revealed by accident after its completion, flummoxed the French media. Was this clock enthusiasm gone wild? A thrill-seeking prank? A scheme to embarrass or even subvert government? How many other operations had the group carried out? Who was the group? A fascinating new memoir (only available in French for now, alas) by its pseudonymous spokesman, "Lazar Kunstmann," offers answers, deeper mysteries and numerous such tales of plucky infiltration. Most are unverifiable, especially because he has camouflaged details. (It is undeniable that they fixed the Panthéon's clock.)...

Kunstmann and his compatriots don't believe in waiting for permission, so they almost always operate secretly, out of sight. They continually improve and make use of Paris's many unused and underused spaces, especially its vast subterranean network of tunnels, caves and abandoned basements. They dig out new interconnections. They add gardens to provide oxygen. They've fixed up underground rooms as auditoriums for film festivals. They've done midnight theater inside government buildings. Anything and everything, as long as it interests them and is "positive, apolitical, benevolent" and realizable.

Operating isn't as easy as it used to be. The police now regularly patrol underground. Nonetheless, the group manages to thrive, owing mostly to the know-how (detailed in part in the book) that they've built up over 28 years of existence....

The group calls itself UX (for "Urban eXperiment"). It began as three bored middle-school students sneaking underground, and slowly evolved into today's diverse organization, which is broken into cells by skill – cartography, infiltration, tunneling, masonry, internal communications, archiving, restoration, cultural programming. They are men and women (the infiltration group is all female) of various ages and motivations. They devote a good deal of spare cash and nearly all their spare hours to the cause, spending more time on it than on their day jobs – as architects, journalists, historians, nurses, lawyers; one is a rock driller, another is a state prosecutor, Kunstmann is a film editor. Nearly all of their friends are from within the group. It resembles a commune, though the members circulate in society and don't live together....

UX is not out to escape, subvert, or change society, Kunstmann says, but simply to enrich life in it. "Our approach is not to replace something that already exists, or to say 'This thing here, we're going to do it better.' Here in the cultural landscape, there are things that already exist, some good, others less good. Everyone's persuaded that that's all there is. They endlessly debate which are good and which are bad. We're persuaded that among those things not being done, some would be very positive."

What it is they do remains mostly mysterious, 99% of it totally unknown, according to Kunstmann. Seeing many advantages to secrecy and few to publicity, he only details projects that have inadvertently become public, especially when it comes to their restorations, which he fears could be looted or vandalized if he gave away their locations (most lie below ground, unguarded). The same anonymity that dooms sites to degradation also protects them once they've been restored. He says all their restorations are done as minimally and expertly as possible, some with the help of specialists that have been quietly recruited. Often it's as simple a matter as repairing a leaky roof threatening to flood a room. Kunstmann says they have undertaken over a dozen projects, each requiring one to

two years of work, and that these have included a medieval crypt, a World War II bunker and an abandoned power substation....

If Kunstmann is so allergic to publicity, why has he published a memoir? He told me, "Well, I believe that publicity could prevent the misfortune of someone saying, 'One can't do that, it would be great if one could, but it's impossible.' At the very least, when someone does it, when one sees things have been done, one can no longer say to oneself it's impossible. One says, 'Ah yes, it's true, one can do that.' Then the question is totally different, it's 'Is it good to do that or not?'"

– excerpted from May 29th, 2009 *thesecondpass.com*, reviewing "Lazar Kunstmann," *La Culture en clandestins. L'UX* (Hazan, Paris). Courtesy of *The Second Pass*.

Madrid: New Institutionalism and Other Antagonisms

This line of work tests models of construction of new forms of intermediation which can break away from the dichotomies which have traditionally constricted the operation of museum institutions, in an experiment of a political nature, since it is related to the re-definition of public society, of the contemporary conditions of cultural production and of the new urban rights and governance. The above concepts are related to a new statute and definition of the public, which has nothing to do with management and administration of State resources, but with examining the place and the notions of the commons, understood as that which articulates the formation of post-traditional and post-identity community and allows the redefinition of the role of the museum not as a public institution derived from Enlightened reformism, but as an institution of the commons.

Criticism / Institution / Transformation: Debate on cultural production...

The starting-point of these encounters is an analysis of the capacity for intervention in the current situation of cultural production, models of critical institution and their relationship with the practices prevailing in different fields of activism, militant investigation, auto-constitution and the new political creations. It will offer a perspective from the standpoint of the directorship and management of museums and art centres, the work of cultural producers, the running of the public programmes of these institutions, and the activities of pioneering public, collective undertakings, public universities and anomalous ones. The seminar will take the form of working sessions and ongoing debates.

The need to project these experiences onto the future is now urgent. The impact of cost-cutting political strategies on the working conditions and budgets of public cultural institutions has already become evident, although this situation is likely to become much worse. There is an evident shift in the new institutional models of culture aimed at establishing the above-mentioned conditions of uncertainty and short-termism, with the aim of projecting them towards the social terrain through the concepts of experimentation and continual learning process. In addition to this situation, there is a confrontation with cultural strategies that will arise from the possible context of a future right-wing political scene with its authoritarian undertones.

In this context, cultural production faces a new future involving different types of implantation of the creative industries and their effects on the independence of public cultural institutions; a concatenation of processes of construction of the



Cowley Club, Brighton, London

brand-name city and the biennial phenomenon; an increased precariousness for those involved in cultural production and an emerging struggle for the public utility. This context is also affected by the fact that the issue is not one of an authoritarian (governmental) shift of direction in cultural policies, but rather a series of internal tensions and initiatives arising from within it, an intention to coordinate and harmonise interests between small, precarious and/or independent producers (individual entities who are responsible for their own projects and for themselves), cultural and art centres focused on demand, cultural containers, intermediary entities, critics and curators, and the different levels of government.

It is impossible not to gain the impression that a cycle is coming to an end and that a forward-looking, rebellious analysis, which focuses on the reorganisation of mechanisms of criticism and intervention would not just be a useful undertaking but is also an urgent one. A high level of confidence exists in the mutual capacities for learning and self-questioning, for explaining the ethical, political and institutional impulses to act and to intend to act. Overall, it is time to rebuild a supporting structure that will allow for a continuation of the disposition to undertake political creation, constructive dissent, and the exploration of zones of intimacy between the narratives of art, thought and revolution at the present time....

Beyond the critical institution and the model: "Emerging collectives and networks and tactical collaboration"

2nd session. La Casa Invisible, Málaga June 24 5 p.m. June 25 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The public cultural institution and "anomalous" institutions in the political economy of culture.

+info

3rd session September (pending day) 5 p.m.

Austerity and crisis in the democratic and experimental cultural institution. Realism and dis-utopia: public institutions....

Nociones Comunes

Traficantes de Sueños and Museo Reina Sofía // Lectures and workshops // course

Nociones Comunes is conceived as a political education project for people who want to change reality using a critical perspective, collectively building the ways of thinking and acting that will help us get our bearings in a world often bewildering in its infinite power narratives. Nociones Comunes is a collaborative project undertaken by Traficantes de Sueños and Museo Reina Sofía, in support of independent, informal education and debate-based learning. + info

Cities Without Borders // Workshop, graphic activism and media campaign // Ongoing // Málaga, Córdoba, Sevilla, Tenerife, Las Palmas, Madrid, Valencia, Zaragoza, Bilbao, Pamplona, Barcelona, Tarragona, La Coruña and Oviedo

Organizers: Universidad Nómada and the Social Rights Bureaus // Co-produced by: Museo Reina Sofía // ciudadessinfronteras.net/

In a decentralized set of public interventions and pedagogical activities, this campaign attempts to draw attention to one of the priorities within the practices of social movements: understanding, awareness and reporting of the governing devices of migration movements organized around the notion of border regime....

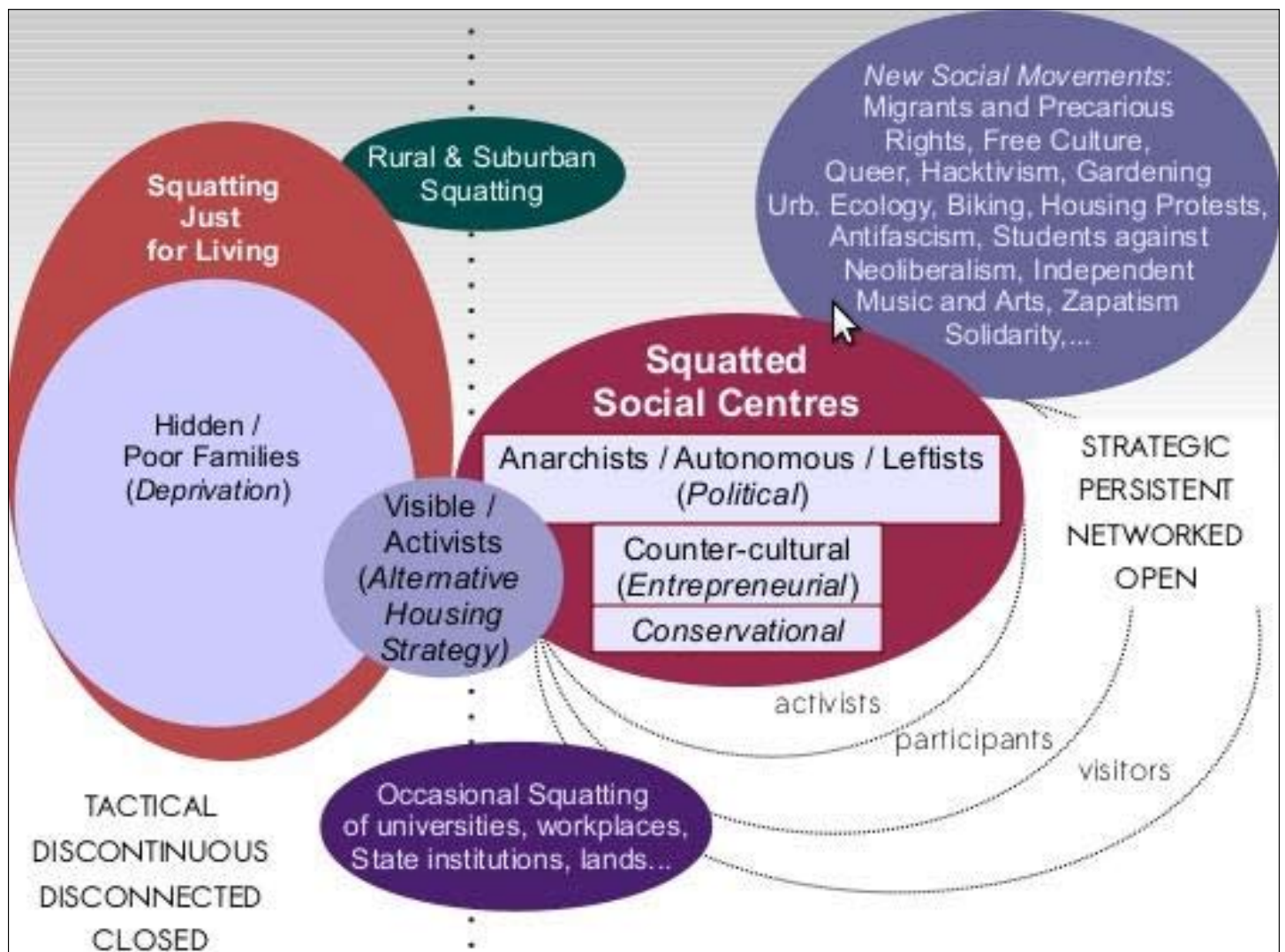
— redacted from the website of the Museo Reina Sofía



59 Rue de Rivoli in Paris, an "art squat" legalized as studio warren

Right: Peter Missing, musician, artist, long-time squatter at his 2004 show at Clayton's Outlaw Museum, New York city. Missing lives in Berlin; his studio is at Tacheles.

Below: Diagram of the dynamics of contemporary squatting by Miguel Martinez, 2011.





This is not a document of squats – rather, it is a map of permitted short-term pop-up shops – “anti-squats” if you will – as arranged by a real estate developer in central Madrid. For an account of the “hacking” of this initiative, see “There goes Ballesta street” by Ana Méndez de Andés, 2009, online at observatoriometropolitano.org; and Stephen Luis Vilaseca, “The TriBall Case: 'Okupación Creativa ¡Ya!' vs. Okupa Hacktivismo” in *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, Volume 14, 2010

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“House Magic” welcomes contributors and collaborators of all kinds in the ongoing project of representing the global movement of political squatting through zining and exhibitions. Please contact [awm13579 \[at\] gmail.com](mailto:awm13579@gmail.com) if you are interested.



Right: “House Magic: Bureau of Foreign Correspondence” display of zine #2 at the ABC No Rio “Ides of March” building-wide exhibition in 2010. The table displays zines relating to the political squatting and social center movement downloaded off the internet and photocopied for sale at cost.





National assembly in Puerta del Sol, Madrid, mid-June 2011

HOUSE MAGIC #3

reports on occupations
and squatting in Europe,
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<http://www.59rivoli.org>